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#129

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

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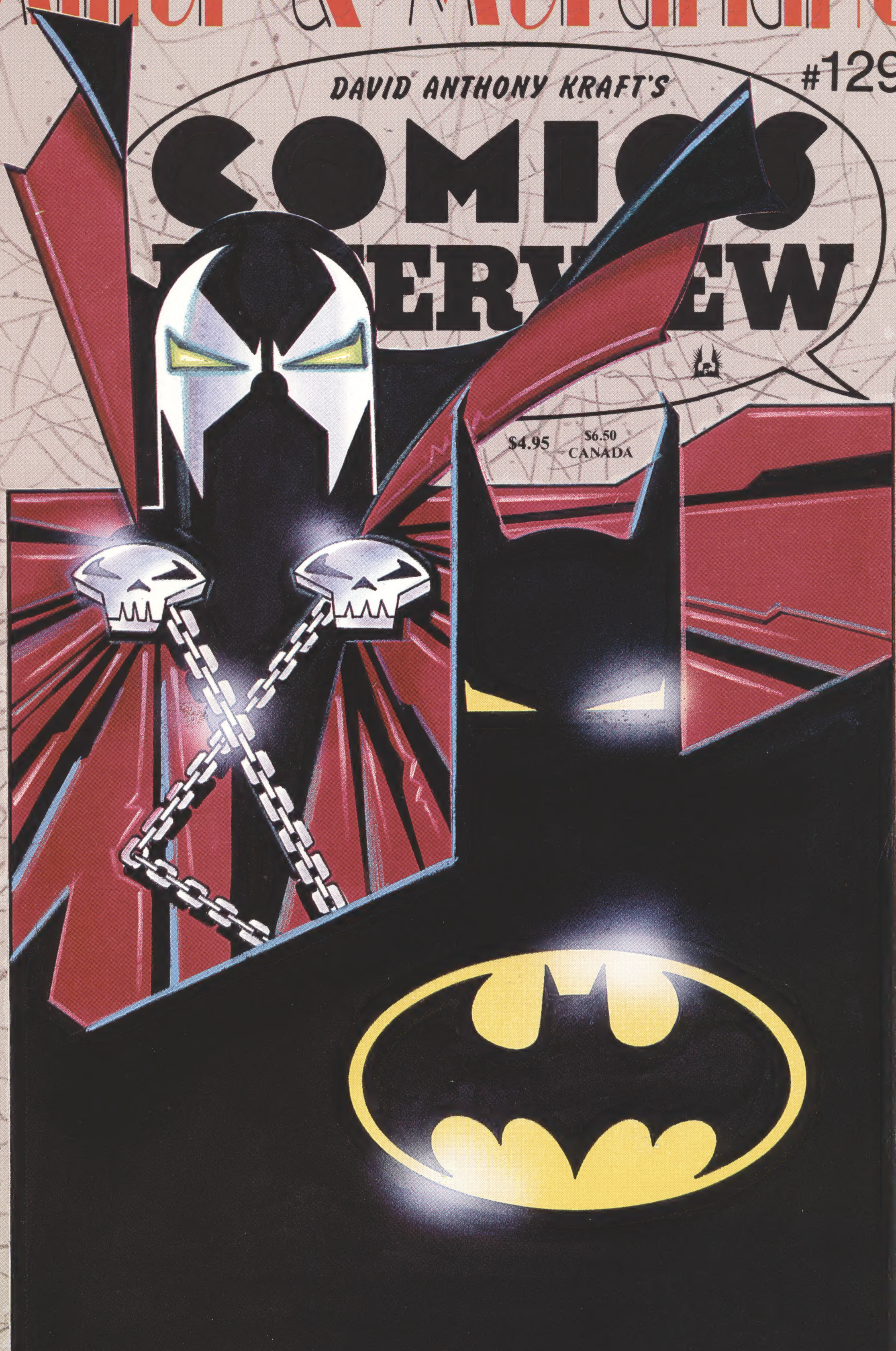

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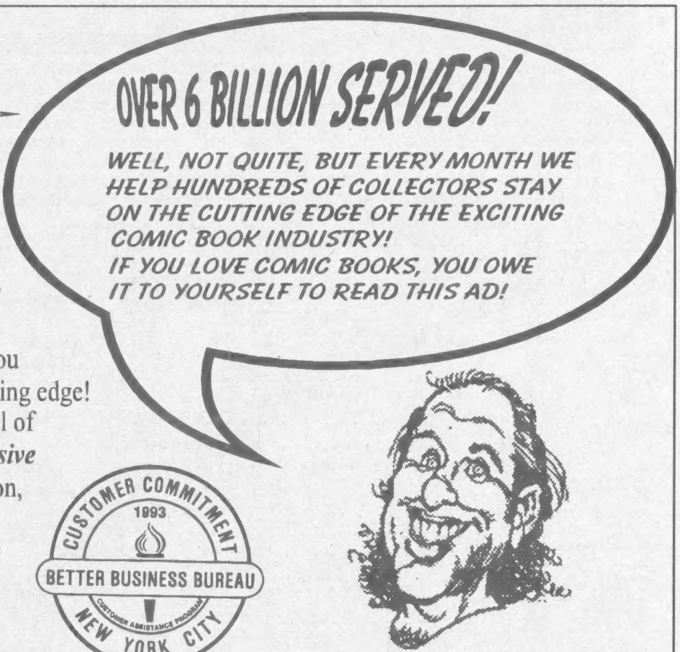
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conceived by
JIM SALICRUP
editorial and design consultant emeritus

DARREL L BOATZ
MARK LUCAS
CHARLES S NOVINSKIE
associate editors

SHEL DORF
LOU MOUGIN
contributing editors

MACHINE WOLF GRAPHICS
art & tone direction

DON MARKSTEIN
typography

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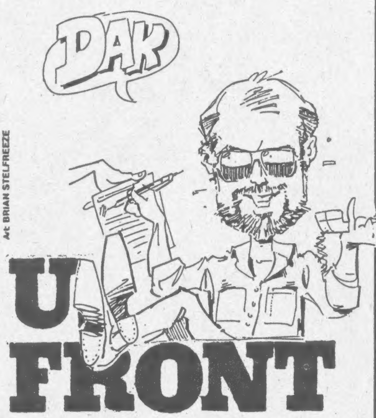

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U FRONT

Avid students of my editorials and longtime COMICS INTERVIEW readers will recall that on more than one occasion I have commented upon the unusual nature of the area in which my "fortress of solitude" on Screamer Mountain is located. But for those of you with short memories or new to this magazine, a brief reprise:

Back when **Steve Gerber** wrote MAN-THING for Marvel, a small Florida village called Citrusville was the nexus — of practically everything. In real life, however, the nexus is a small Georgia village called Clayton.

This is where I held my first magazine editing job, following in the footsteps of **Don Pendleton**, now practically a brand-name in men's adventure books via his character, The Executioner (and now scripting THE EXECUTIONER comics for Innovation). SF and fantasy artists **Ron & Val Lakey Lindahn** live nearby. Cabbage Patch Kids kingpin **Xavier Roberts** operates his empire from only a short drive away, and a slightly further drive brings you to adventure writers **Jeff & Sharon Ahern** or, in a different direction, celebrated SF author **Sharon Webb.**

Actor and comics fan **David Carradine** turned up on my doorstep during the filming of THE LONG RIDERS here (Clayton is a kind of movie mecca, too, oddly enough). Former FLASH GORDON writer/artist **Dan Barry** (now doing INDIANA JONES for Dark Horse) has settled in the area.

And now I come to find, via his anecdotes this issue, that none other than **Ferd Johnson** and legendary cartoonist **Frank Willard** spent their salad days doing MOON MULLINS near here! Highlands, N.C., is only about 23 miles up the very winding and very scenic road (actor **Burt Reynolds** has a place along the way) or maybe 10 miles "as the crow flies." It's one of my favorite places to spend time!

It is, indeed, a small world — and Clayton really *is* the nexus.

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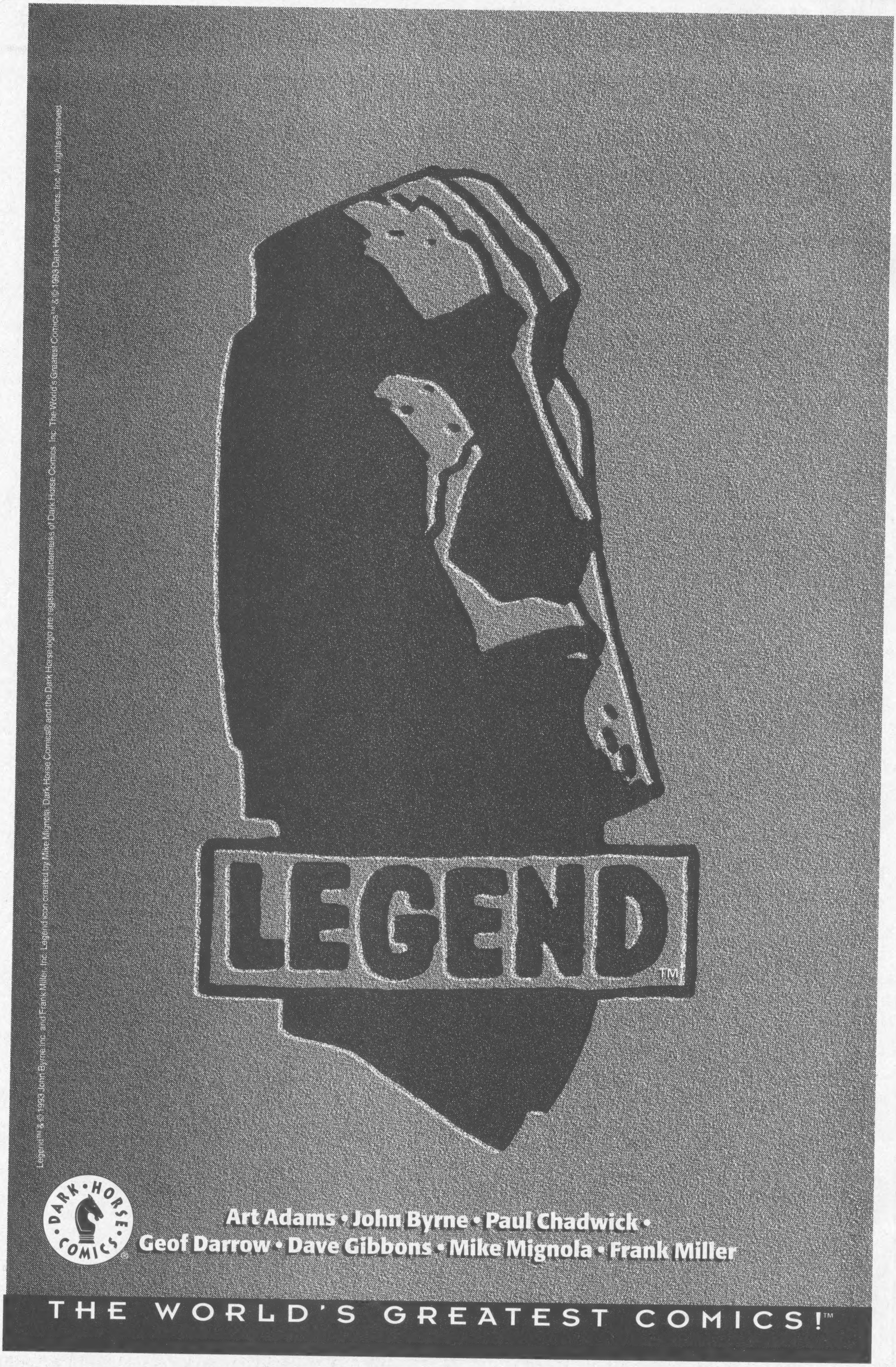
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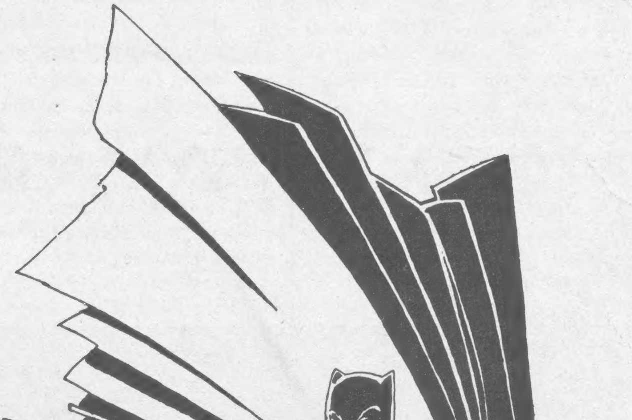
“This was an opportunity to do Batman at his prime.”

FRANK MILLER



SPAWN/BATMAN — Todd's, anyway — is a collaborative work, by McFarlane (Spawn) and Miller (Batman). For the completed version of the above, see our interview with Todd.

One of the most influential comics creators of his generation, both in front of and behind the page, Frank Miller has made a key impact on the industry. He has produced a body of work thus far of depth and scope that few have matched. Beginning by redefining DAREDEVIL, crafting the graphic novel RONIN, up to redefining Batman in THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS, Miller's early work set a new standard of excellence. He's currently reemerged after a stint in Hollywood, working on a wealth of new projects, including SIN CITY: A DAME TO KILL FOR (a companion piece to his SIN CITY graphic novel), MARTHA WASHINGTON GOES TO WAR (a sequel to GIVE ME LIBERTY, with Dave Gibbons), RUSTY THE BOY ROBOT AND THE BIG GUY (with Geoff Darrow), and BATMAN/SPAWN (with Todd McFarlane). We caught up with Miller to discuss his current projects as well as gain insight into his views on the comics industry . . .

MARK LUCAS: *BATMAN/SPAWN. Why this project as your return to Batman?*

FRANK MILLER: Todd asked. **Todd McFarlane** called me up. We'd had fun working before (on SPAWN #11). It seemed like an awfully good time.

MARK: *What was the genesis for the team up? How did BATMAN/SPAWN come about?*

FRANK: Todd arranged with DC about everything and then approached me. I came on a little late in the game. I know it was something he wanted to do and he'd wanted me involved. I guess his enthusiasm rubbed off on me. I mainly enjoyed the chance to do a Batman story that would take place between my other work on Batman. As I've done the young and bumbling version of the character (BATMAN: YEAR ONE) and the arthritic version (in THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS), this was an opportunity to do Batman at his absolute prime. That's what I'm looking forward to writing.

MARK: *How does the Batman in BATMAN/SPAWN differ from the other Batmans you've done?*

BATMAN and THE DEMON TM & ©1994 DC Comics, Inc. / SIN CITY ©1994 Frank Miller / ROBOCOP TM & ©1994 Orion Pictures Corporation / MARTHA WASHINGTON GOES TO WAR ©1994 Frank Miller & Dave Gibbons / THE BIG GUY & RUSTY THE BOY ROBOT ©1994 Frank Miller & Geoffrey Darrow / DAREDEVIL TM & ©1994 Marvel Entertainment Group.

“I want to see shops that show you 60 years of

FRANK: I see YEAR ONE and DARK KNIGHT as both involving the same character at different periods in his life. But, there’s a great distance between Batman at age 21 or 22 and Batman at age 55. This story would be taking place with Batman at around 31 years old where he would be at his absolute peak as an athlete and he would have all of his faculties together. This is a Batman who is not burdened by physical discomfort or age. Nor is he burdened by a lack of experience. This is the completely efficient, competent Batman.

MARK: *What’s the plot have in store for us?*

FRANK: I don’t want to go too much into the plot. This is only a one-shot. If I give it all away, no one will go out and buy it. It involves a mind-control menace that uses old Soviet weaponry. Batman’s hunt to find out who’s behind it brings him to New York and face-to-face with Spawn. I’d like to comment that the two don’t get along very well. This isn’t like a WORLD’S FINEST comic. It’s more like a buddy movie gone wrong.

MARK: *This is the second time you’ve written a Spawn story. What do you find appealing about that character?*

FRANK: All kinds of things. What I like most about the character is the totally disenfranchised, down-and-out nature of him. The guy hangs out with winos in an alley. That makes for such a nice contrast to a character like Batman, who’s got it all. I also like what Todd does with the book. Between the issues of SPAWN and in this, I’m going to do my best to be consistent.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Frank Miller.
Born: 1957—Maryland
Occupation: Cartoonist
Current Residence: Los Angeles
Education: High school
Greatest influences: I often have an absolute favorite artist of all time for about two years. I mean no disrespect to anyone else. Currently, **Johnny Craig, Will Eisner, Jack Kirby** as an artist. As a writer, **Mickey Spillane.** Also **Jim Thompson** and others.
Book currently reading: STRIPTEASE, by **Charles Hiassen.**

MARK: *What’s it like working with Todd?*

FRANK: It’s an absolute blast. He’s a nutcase. He approaches the stuff with great enthusiasm. He’s a real deadline bender. He simply put a hell of a lot of work into it.

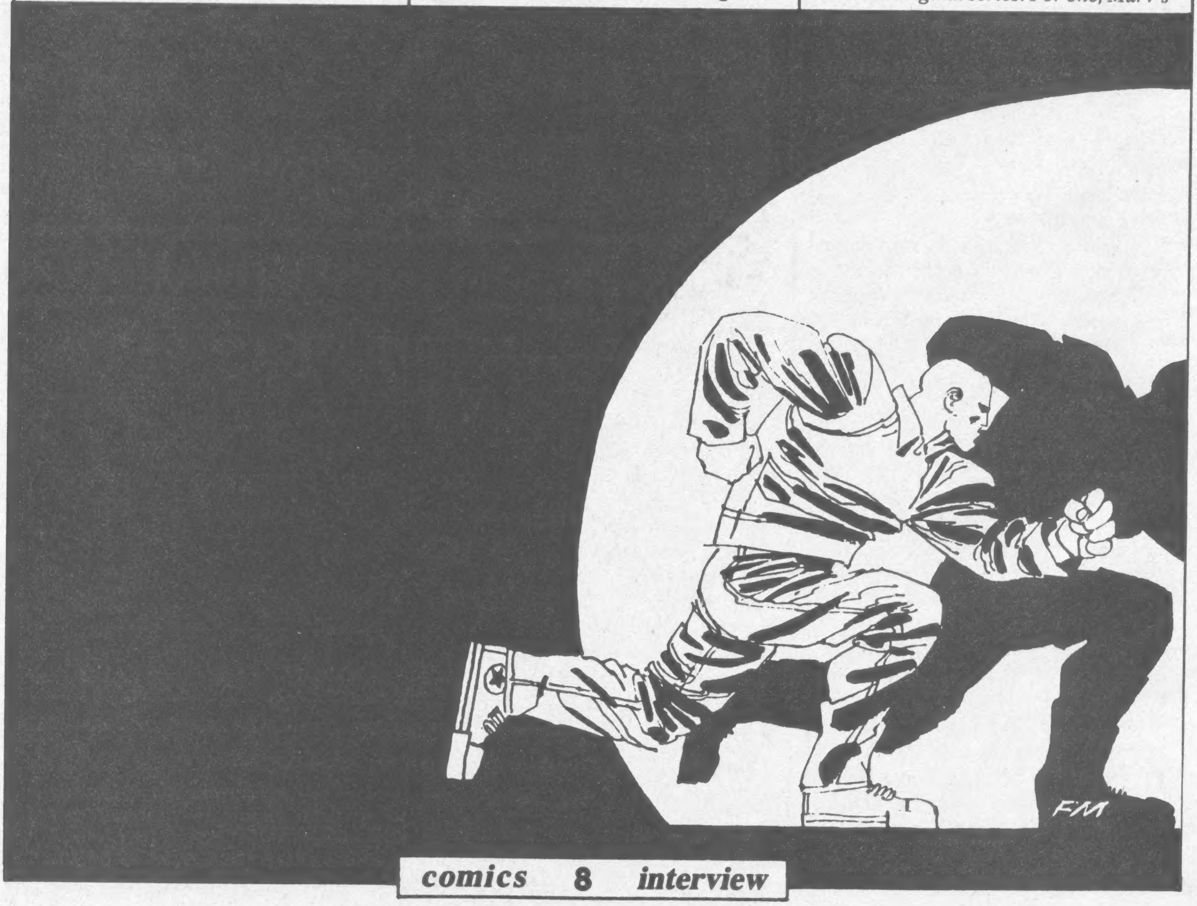
MARK: *Batman’s a 50+ year old character and Spawn’s just been around for a year and a half. Do you think Spawn has what it takes to make it in the long run?*

FRANK: I know Todd does. If Todd wants to continue doing Spawn, it’s going to last for a very long time. Todd’s no flash in the pan.

MARK: *Any interest in working on future projects with him?*

FRANK: We haven’t discussed anything. Mostly, it’s going to be very hard to pry me away from SIN CITY and MARTHA WASHINGTON for awhile to come. On the second half of the new SIN CITY series, I’m having so much fun it’s ridiculous. I’m dying to get onto the third book. So, I think I’ll occasionally do this kind of project. But, most of my attention is on writing and drawing my own originals.

MARK: *Speaking of SIN CITY, A DAME TO KILL FOR is a bit different than the original series. For one, Marv’s*



comics history. I want to see it available to readers.”

back alive. Is this a prequel?

FRANK: Not exactly. A DAME TO KILL FOR has a longer time span than the original SIN CITY. It begins before and ends afterwards. In the later issues of this series, you'll kind of see the first series happen in the background. But, Marv appears extensively throughout the middle of it. Dwight is the lead character, but you see Marv from a very different perspective in this series. I'm fleshing out this world as I go. I've a lot of characters to introduce. You'll see a number of familiar faces from the first series in this one.

MARK: *For the SIN CITY "universe" (for lack of a better term), is there going to be a single major character, or will we follow a cast, almost like a HILL STREET BLUES?*

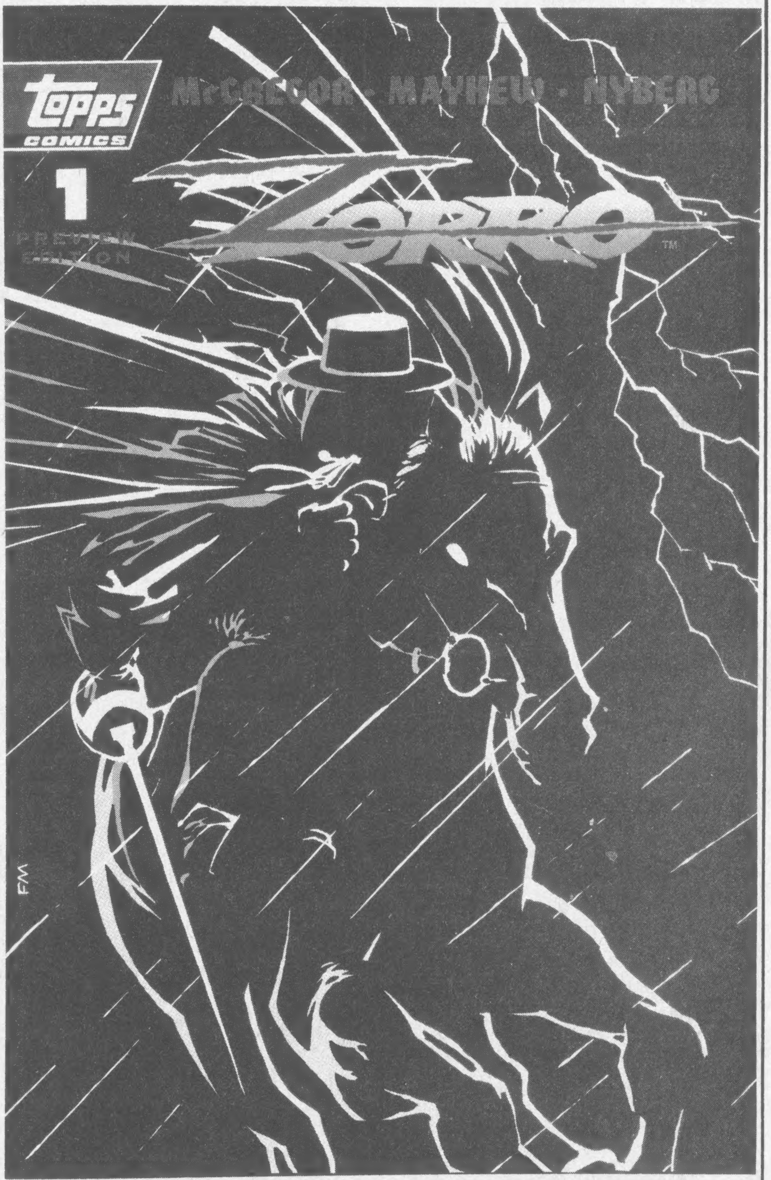
FRANK: Neither the first book nor the second is an ensemble piece. Each has a lead. Without giving too much away, there are characters you'll see recur. There is at least one character who will be the lead character in a number of books. But it's not going to turn into something that completely pivots on a single character. I've got too many stories to tell.

MARK: *SIN CITY runs under the Legends imprint. How did that come about?*

FRANK: That was me and **John Byrne**. We got talking and felt that there were a number of us who were doing comics that shared a kind of sensibility to them but didn't really have a niche in today's marketplace. We weren't doing superhero universe stuff. We weren't doing autobiographical comics, but the stuff carries much more of our own personalities. We brought the group together under the label so a reader who picks up, say, SIN CITY, will perhaps pick up HELLBOY, **Mike Mignola's** new book. Our stamp of personality and quality is the idea behind Legend. We felt that it was necessary to distinguish ourselves. To base an imprint on talent rather than a corporate name. We'd seen what had happened with Image and how, at least in the beginning, theirs was based on the artists involved with the books and how people came to associate it with that. We thought it was time to try something like that ourselves.

MARK: *Mike Richardson's described the concept as mini-series which will then be collected into paperbacks and ideally kept in print. Do you see that as the future of the industry?*

FRANK: I see that as my future in the industry. Absolutely. Ever since I started on RONIN, this is what I've wanted to do. I want to see comics shops that show you 60 years' worth of comics history — not one month's. If work is of value, I want to see it available to the readers. I essentially want the life of a novelist.



Previous page: Detail from SIN CITY: A DAME WORTH KILLING FOR cover, pencils and inks by Frank. Above: Cover by Miller.

MARK: *Do you think the dealers/ retailers will help you in this?*

FRANK: They have so far. There were many more copies of the paperback of SIN CITY than there were of any of the original chapters. It's going into a third printing now. DARK KNIGHT continues to go back to press. And, new readers continue to be introduced to it. I think that's the way it's going to go for the people selling primarily to readers. If you think of this stuff strictly as a collectible item, no, there's no future in that sense.

MARK: *Do you think the American comic market can attain the same type of mass market popularity with these books as France or Japan has?*

FRANK: I've no idea and I wouldn't want to get that in a hurry. I've worked in Hollywood, and I know what mass market media is like. But I hope for slow growth.

“I think what I enjoyed most was being on the set,

And, I hope we can keep our personality and individuality and sincerity as we go. I've no interest in us ending up being a censored, controlled medium like television, for instance. I do think that primarily it's up to the talent to produce books that are fresh and accessible and have enough to them to attract a wider audience. The fact that we've got almost nothing but superhero comics . . . one cannot moan and groan about the marketplace being limited when all we're producing is one kind of comic. I love superheroes, but more and more I'm finding myself trying to explore the different things that comics can do in other genres.

MARK: *Do you think the market's out there for this type of book?*

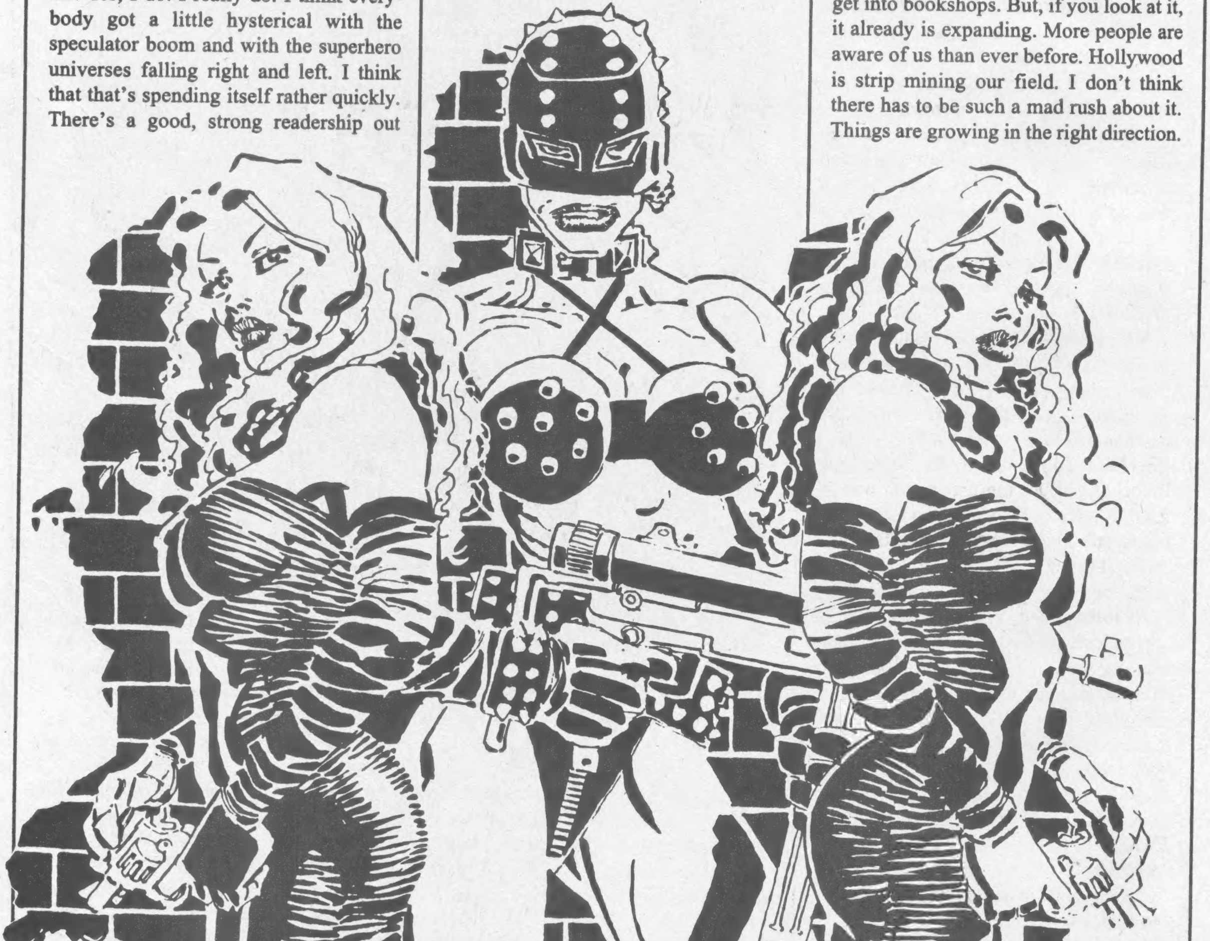
FRANK: I sure hope so. It has been so far. Yes, I do. I really do. I think everybody got a little hysterical with the speculator boom and with the superhero universes falling right and left. I think that that's spending itself rather quickly. There's a good, strong readership out there who's willing to give some stuff a chance.

MARK: *Do you think this audience is a "cult" audience, or do you think we can expand it to more mass market?*

FRANK: Well, I object to the word "cult" because that's a word that's used to describe people who are under control or a strange little group. I think what we have is a very enthusiastic readership that's quite sizable. We're distinguished mainly by a distribution system here and by a historical self-contempt that the comics industry has. That's what has to change first. But, yes, I think there are wider audiences out there provided we produce the work that the wider audience would be interested in. SIN CITY came out of a real desire for me to just do crime stories. I've wanted to do that since I was an amateur. That's a case where it could attract more people who might be put off by the tights. It doesn't mean I'm going to corner the superhero market with it, but I think there are more people out there who would enjoy it.

MARK: *How do you think we can get the market to change? The distribution system?*

FRANK: The distribution system, as far as I can tell, is pretty amazing. But it essentially works through the comics shops. The way it will change is, first, by artists producing work that deserves wider attention. Very frequently, when there have been books that have come along that have broken the barriers creatively, they've also done so in terms of the marketplace. The other thing will be finding the formats and finding ways to get into bookshops. But, if you look at it, it already is expanding. More people are aware of us than ever before. Hollywood is strip mining our field. I don't think there has to be such a mad rush about it. Things are growing in the right direction.



Cover for SIN CITY #5.

actually having my hand on the making of a movie."

I'm very confident about the future.

MARK: *When you mentioned Hollywood, what was it like working on ROBOCOP 2 and 3?*

FRANK: It was a real thrill. It was a completely different experience than doing comics. Hollywood is very exciting, very glamorous. It involves a lot of people running a lot of directions. I think what I enjoyed most was being on the set of ROBOCOP 2, actually having my hand on the making of a movie. Hollywood is also maddening. You go through draft after draft. The people you're dealing with move on to other jobs. So, you're dealing with a whole new set of critics that you didn't even know before. It's an irreplaceable experience for me. But I have to say that comics are my first love. I love the freedom. It's very rare, historically, that any artist gets the kind of freedom I have now. Comics to date have been much more deeply rewarding.

MARK: *Is that because you have greater control over everything?*

FRANK: Yes, that's the main reason. Also, I love to draw. We've got this wonderful audience where you're not dealing with the focus groups and you're not in a room full of people who are terrified because so much money is at stake. Mostly, yes, because I can be my own little dictator on my own little book. When I finish a page, I know that's what it's going to look like when it sees print.

MARK: *Why do you feel that the Robocop sequels were viewed as disappointments?*

FRANK: I'd be the last one to ask. Probably because the first movie was so good. It's really hard to match that. Also, not to talk about the virtues or faults of either of the movies I was involved in, but a factor was also the anti-violence crusade that's been going on lately. There was a certain amount of bad timing. Sequels are tough. Going back to my original answer, I think it was because the first ROBOCOP was so good and did such a complete job of convincing you and involving you with the lead character.

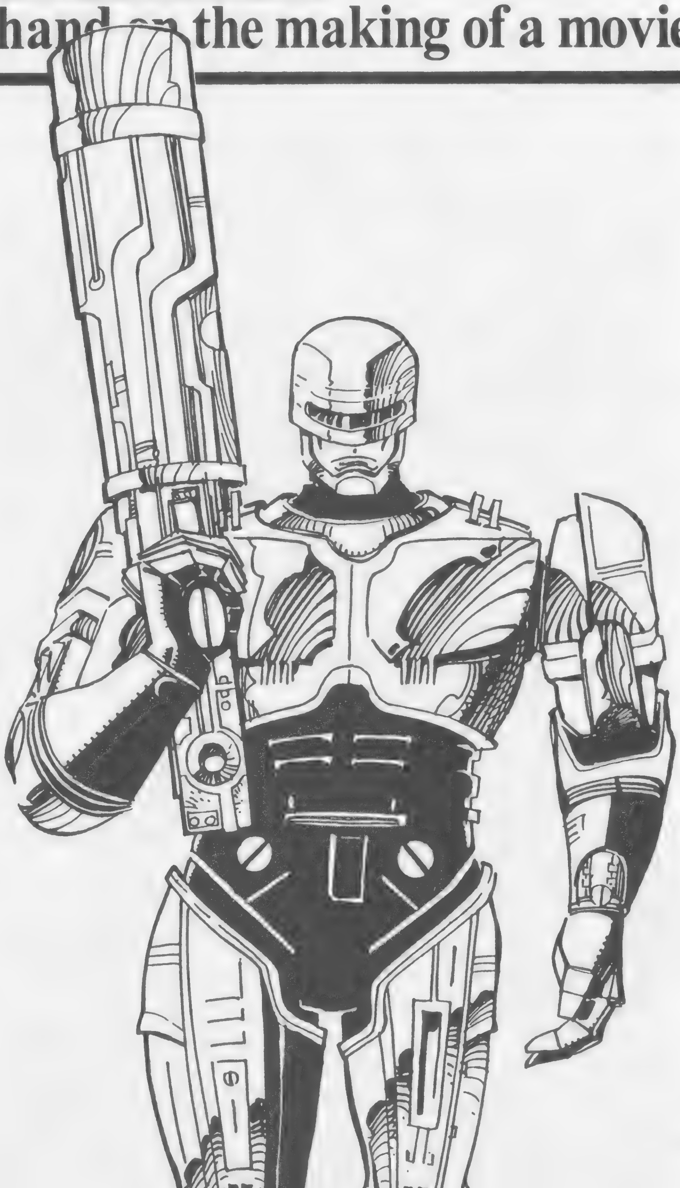
MARK: *Are you going to have any input on the ROBOCOP TV series?*

FRANK: No.

MARK: *You had a small part in ROBOCOP 2. Have you ever considered pursuing more acting?*

FRANK: I'd love to someday. It was a lot of fun. Obviously, I only said about four words. It would be a fun and very different thing to attempt.

MARK: *Would you like to see some of your other projects tackled by*



Millions of you have probably seen the finished promo art created from this, Walt Simonson's original excerpted art from the Miller/Simonson ROBOCOP VS. TERMINATOR 4-issue series from Dark Horse Comics. (Simonson: "I retouched the gun to complete the gun barrel.") For more than 50 pieces of Walt's originals, check out COMICS INTERVIEW #111, from our back issues.

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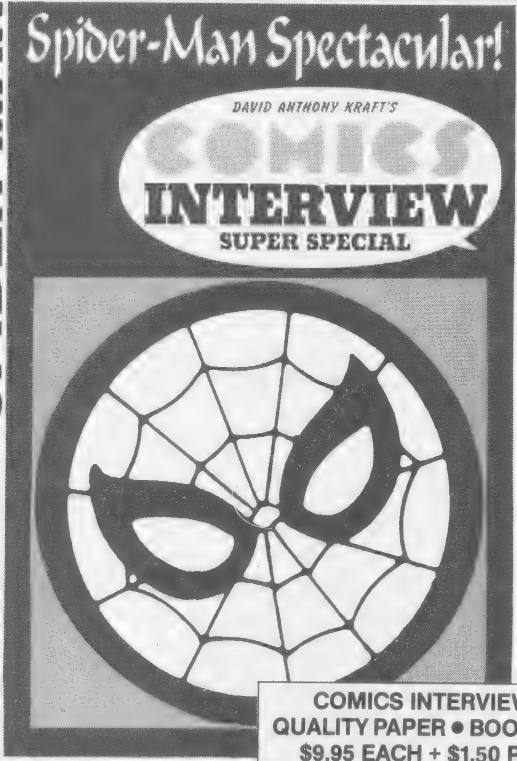
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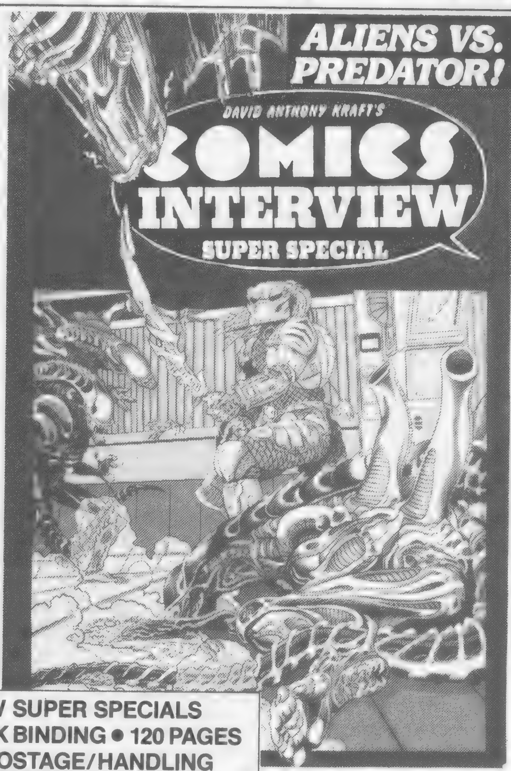
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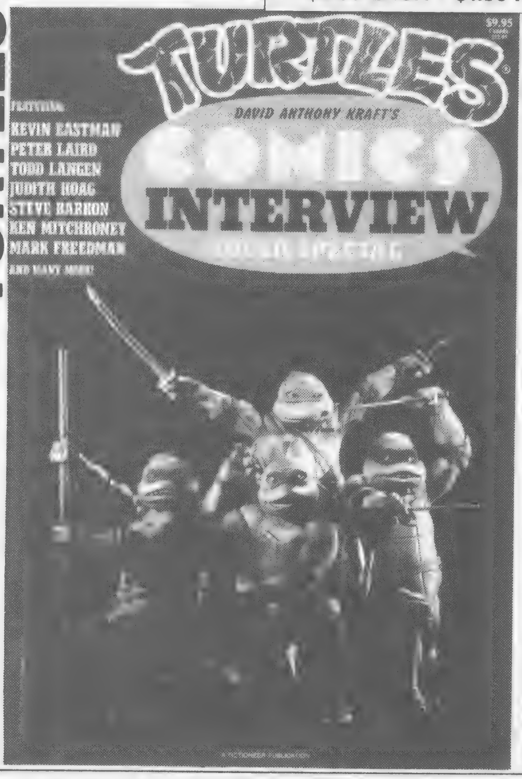
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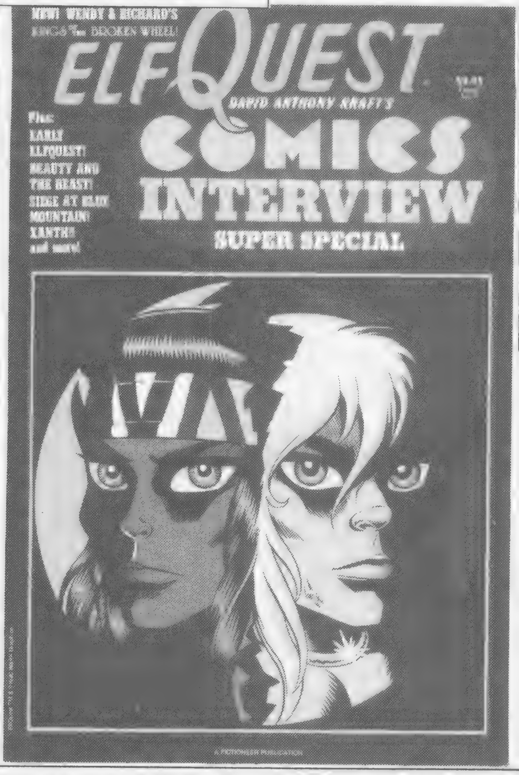
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"You're talking to somebody who's living the dream of his life."

Hollywood?

FRANK: *(Laughter.)* I like the way you phrased that. I would love to "tackle" some of my projects in film; however, I'm not sure I'd want Hollywood to "tackle" them for me.

MARK: *Which ones?*

FRANK: You name it, really. I would have to take it case-by-case. I wrote a screenplay for ELEKTRA, but I believe that project has moved off to **Oliver Stone's** company. I think a lot of the stuff I've done would translate. It's just that it would be a job of translation. Probably the two that I think would most lend themselves to treatment would be SIN CITY and MARTHA WASHINGTON. But, I'd have to make sure it was done right. To be perfectly honest, the books give me so much pleasure that I don't worry too much about that.

MARK: *The ELEKTRA film with Oliver Stone's been reported in VARIETY as being optioned for production. What can you tell us about it?*

FRANK: I can't tell you anything about it. I wrote a draft for TriStar Pictures a long time ago. I have no idea what's going on.

MARK: *So you have absolutely no input?*

FRANK: Not so far.

MARK: *Who would you like to see play Elektra?*

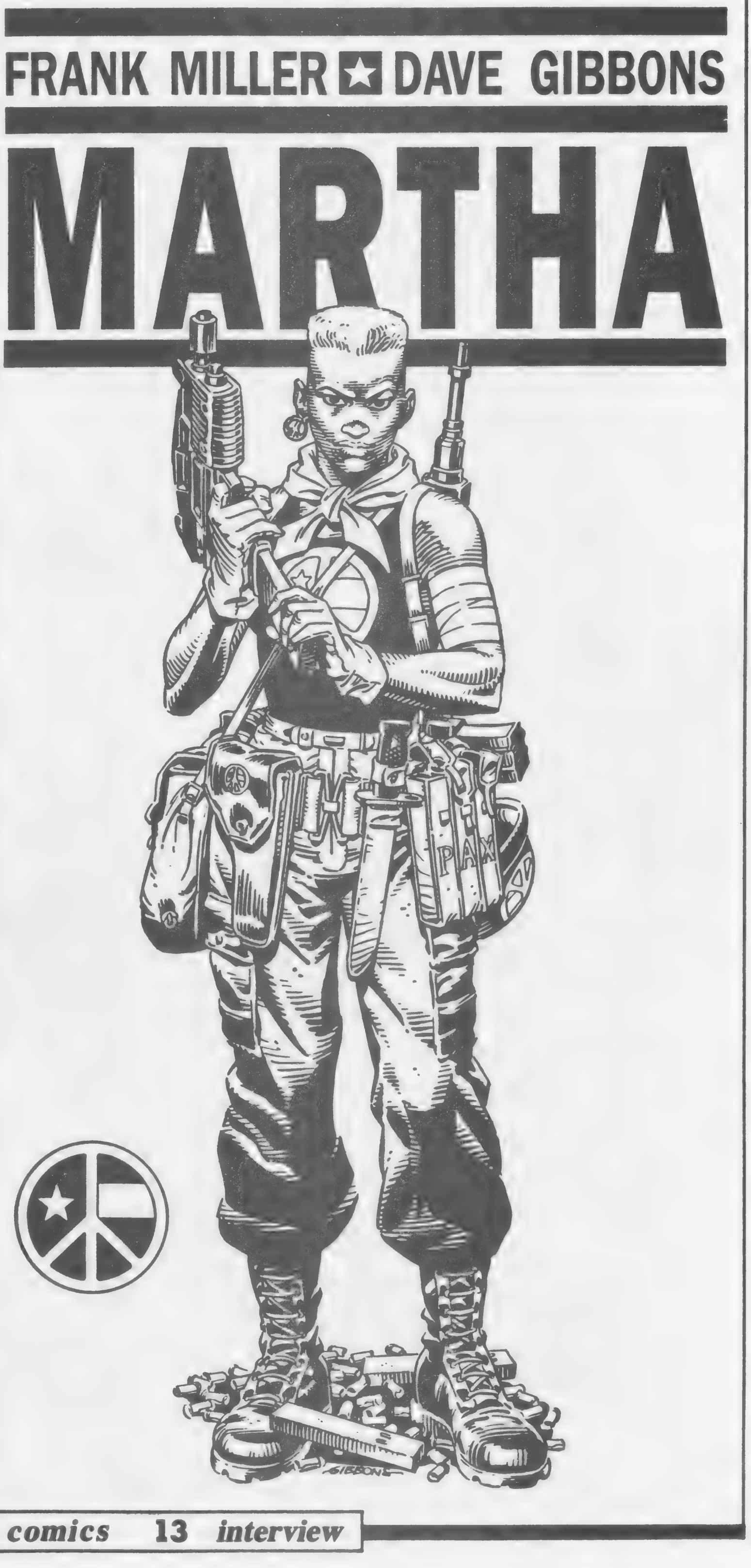
FRANK: Someone nobody's ever seen before. Somebody who could create that role in such a way that Elektra would walk on the screen, not whatever star we've seen in the last eight movies we saw. They don't use enough unknowns in Hollywood.

MARK: *It seems that you're more prolific now than at any time since you broke into comics. What was the impetus for this?*

FRANK: I don't know. Perhaps it's opportunity. You're talking to somebody who's living the dream of his life. I entered the field at a very, very different time, when things were much more restrictive and superheroes were about all you could do. Not that I have anything against superheroes — I still love doing them — but things have opened up so that, if an artist has enough of a following and if he wants it, he can be much more involved in the entire process and exert a lot more control over the work. It took awhile to really get the hang of doing originals and creating a world for each first time out. But now that I've done that I feel freer and happier about doing comics than I ever have.

MARK: *You keep mentioning the free-*

The second of many mini-series to come by Miller and Gibbons, MARTHA WASHINGTON GOES TO WAR.



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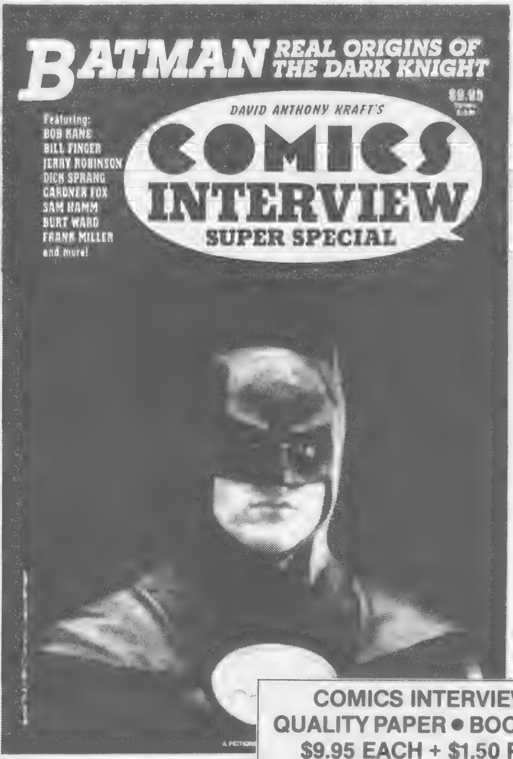
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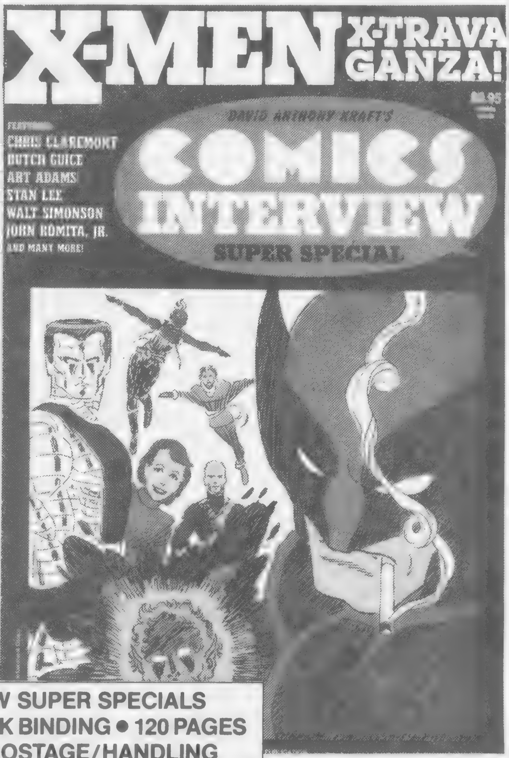
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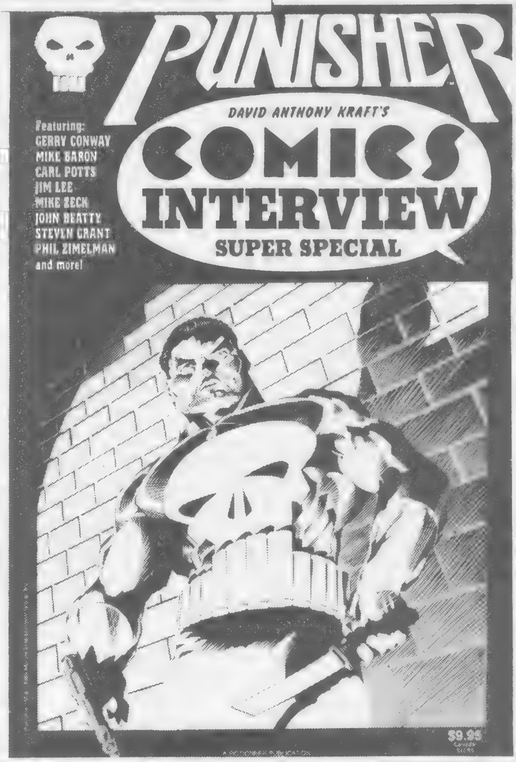
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"Comics Interview Super Specials, Punisher, Batman, X-Men and — the piece de resistance — Masters of Marvel. I'd rate all of these as don't-miss items, particularly the last named. Grade: A."
— *Don Thompson, COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE*

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"When I'm working with another artist, I feed off them."

dom and ability to control your work in comics. Do you prefer working alone or in collaboration?

FRANK: Neither. They're completely different things. They're separate pleasures. When I'm working alone, I do have that control over everything. I'm able to tell a story in a particular way that I feel it or hear it. When I'm working with another artist, I get to feed off them. When I work with **Dave Gibbons,** I get to play to all of his strengths as an artist. The story that I'll come up with for **Dave Gibbons** or **Geoff Darrow** is going to be very, very different than the one I come up with for myself. You get involved with the other person. You study their work. You start wanting to see them draw things. And, it affects the kind of story you write. Considering that the collaborators I've had are shockingly good, it's been an education each time out.

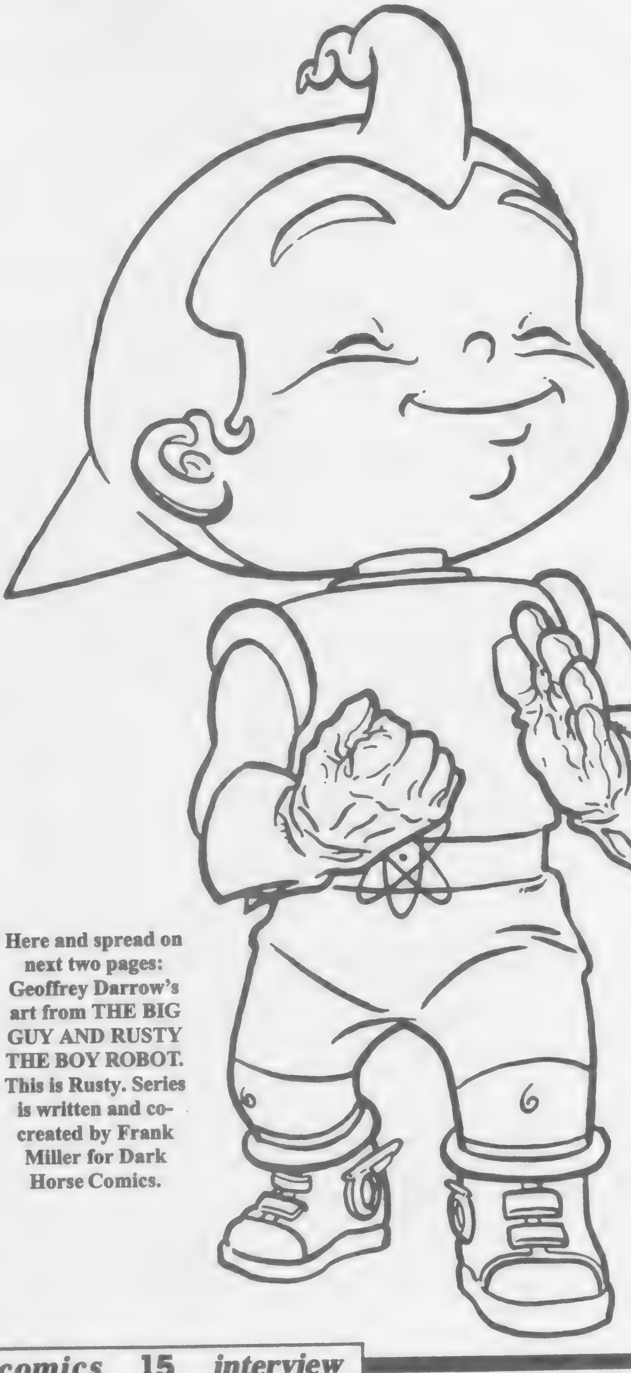
MARK: *Going back a bit, you seemingly came out of nowhere in the late '70s when you started on DAREDEVIL. How did you break into comics?*

FRANK: The hard way. I broke into comics years before that. But by making a nuisance of myself, by getting the very generous help of **Neal Adams** not only in terms of him critiquing my work and advising me how to improve it but setting up the initial contacts I had in the field. Neal did that for a lot of people. He's not given nearly enough credit for the things he's done for younger artists. So I started out taking any job I could get, doing TWILIGHT ZONE comics for Gold Key, WEIRD WAR STORIES for DC, then this and that. Eventually, I got work from **Jim Shooter** and **Archie Goodwin** at Marvel, doing fill-in issues of CAPTAIN MARVEL or SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN. When **Gene Colan,** who had been doing DAREDEVIL since before everybody was born, finally decided he didn't want to do it anymore, I lobbied hard for the job because I had drawn the character once in a Spider-Man fill-in. He felt more like a crime character than any of the others. He wasn't as totally intimidating as Batman was. Besides, no one was offering Batman at the time, anyway. So, I thought that I could bring something to that book by making it more a superhero crime comic than a superhero-among-superheroes comic.

MARK: *What would you suggest to today's budding talents?*

FRANK: It's a very different time. When I came in, the common wisdom in the industry was that there wouldn't be any comic books in another five years. That was before the direct market saved us. Now I would be hard pressed. The only ways I know of are the ways nearly everyone knows of: conventions, presenting portfolios, and bugging people in that manner. It's tough out there right now, but on the other hand, there's an incredible number of comics being produced. There's also a greater demand for comics. I would say just make yourself known, get your work around. If you're going to submit something by mail, keep it very short because people will not read a thick stack of anything. Even a thick stack of drawings is going to put somebody off. Just try everything.

MARK: *Legend has it that you got your start actually in APA-5, which was an Amateur Press Alliance with Mark Verheiden and several other people from Dark Horse.*



Here and spread on next two pages: Geoffrey Darrow's art from THE BIG GUY AND RUSTY THE BOY ROBOT. This is Rusty. Series is written and co-created by Frank Miller for Dark Horse Comics.

“Characters are rarely allowed to age. That’s one reason

FRANK: Yeah, though I wouldn’t say I got my start because I wasn’t paid for it. But that was a real joy of my adolescence.

MARK: *Would you recommend apas for other people who want to break into comics as a training ground or practice field?*

FRANK: For me, it was real good. It gets you involved and gives you an excuse to actually get some work done. If you’re going to use it to work, anything that gets you to work is good. It gets other people to see it and criticize or encourage. You need both.

MARK: *One of your early projects at Marvel was DAREDEVIL. Right now, you’re currently back on Daredevil. THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR is reaching its conclusion. Looking back, how do you feel this project turned out?*

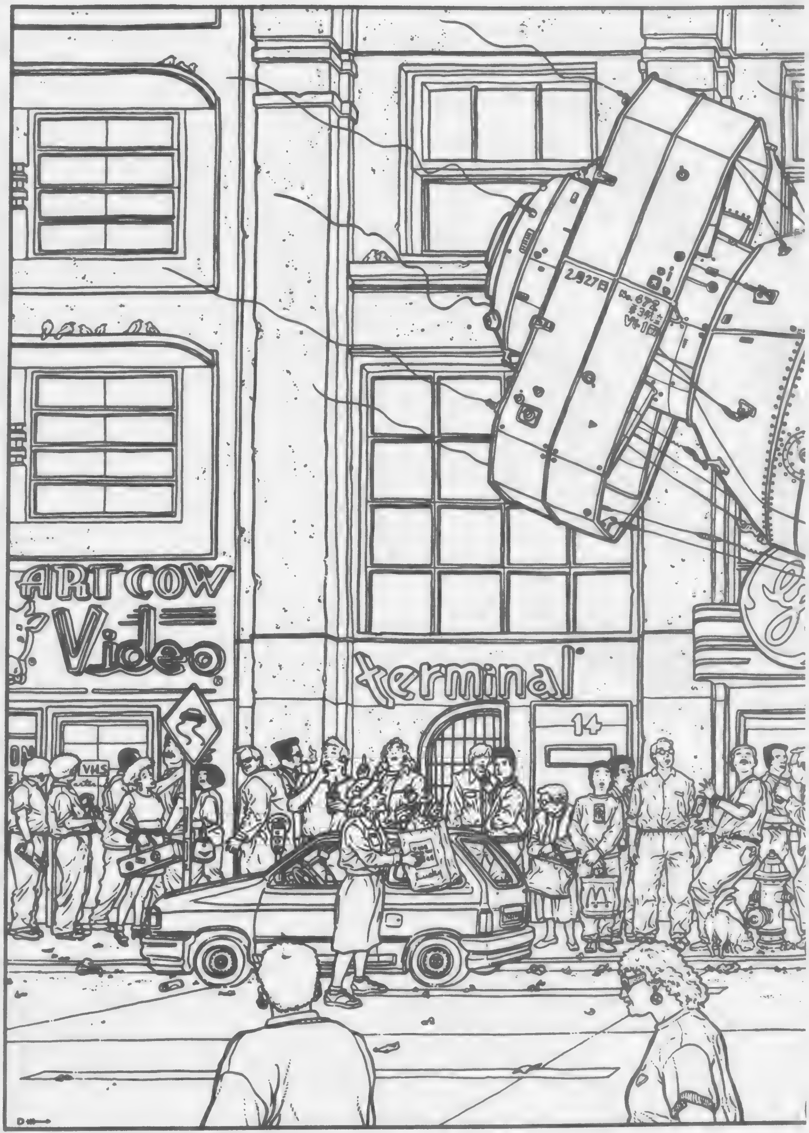
FRANK: Wonderfully. I’ve been delighted with it. I think Marvel really lavished attention on the book in terms of production. Working with **John Romita, Jr.** could not have been more joyful. The guy’s a wizard. He’s really one of the best. And you have **Al Williamson** inking it so you have a real legend stepping in. I think it’s a really good looking book, and I like the way it shaped up. It seems to have been very well received, too, which is always a thrill.

MARK: *After Batman, you’re most associated with Daredevil. What keeps drawing you back to the character?*

FRANK: It’s funny how that works. The first time I left, I didn’t think I’d ever come back to him. I guess I just did enough work on him and just put so much work into defining him that he’s like an old friend I come back to visit and torment every once in awhile. This MAN WITHOUT FEAR series was an opportunity to focus on who Matt is, my first chance to really do him as a young man, to explain the reasons for his particular personality, his particular compulsion. He’s not like other superheroes. He’s motivated very differently. He’s almost an opposite of Batman.

MARK: *How so?*

FRANK: Batman is a control freak. Batman’s entire life stopped making sense when he was a young boy. His parents were murdered and he spent the rest of his life forcing the world to make sense. Daredevil is a much more complex character than that. He doesn’t have the epic quality that Batman does. He’s had a very tortured route to get to who he is. He is someone who could have easily wound up being a bad guy but has learned to control and direct his passions to serve good. But, Daredevil’s overall motivation is not revenge but justice.



MARK: *In what sense?*

FRANK: Batman is, in many ways, punishing the world. Batman just loves to hate criminals. Daredevil can’t let himself go too much because he’s so dangerous. Matt is out to balance the scales in a given situation. He doesn’t have an overpowering urge to kill, as I believe Batman does, which Batman has to restrain. But Matt can’t stand for things to be wrong. He’s also ridden by guilt, shame, and confusion. Just look at his love life.

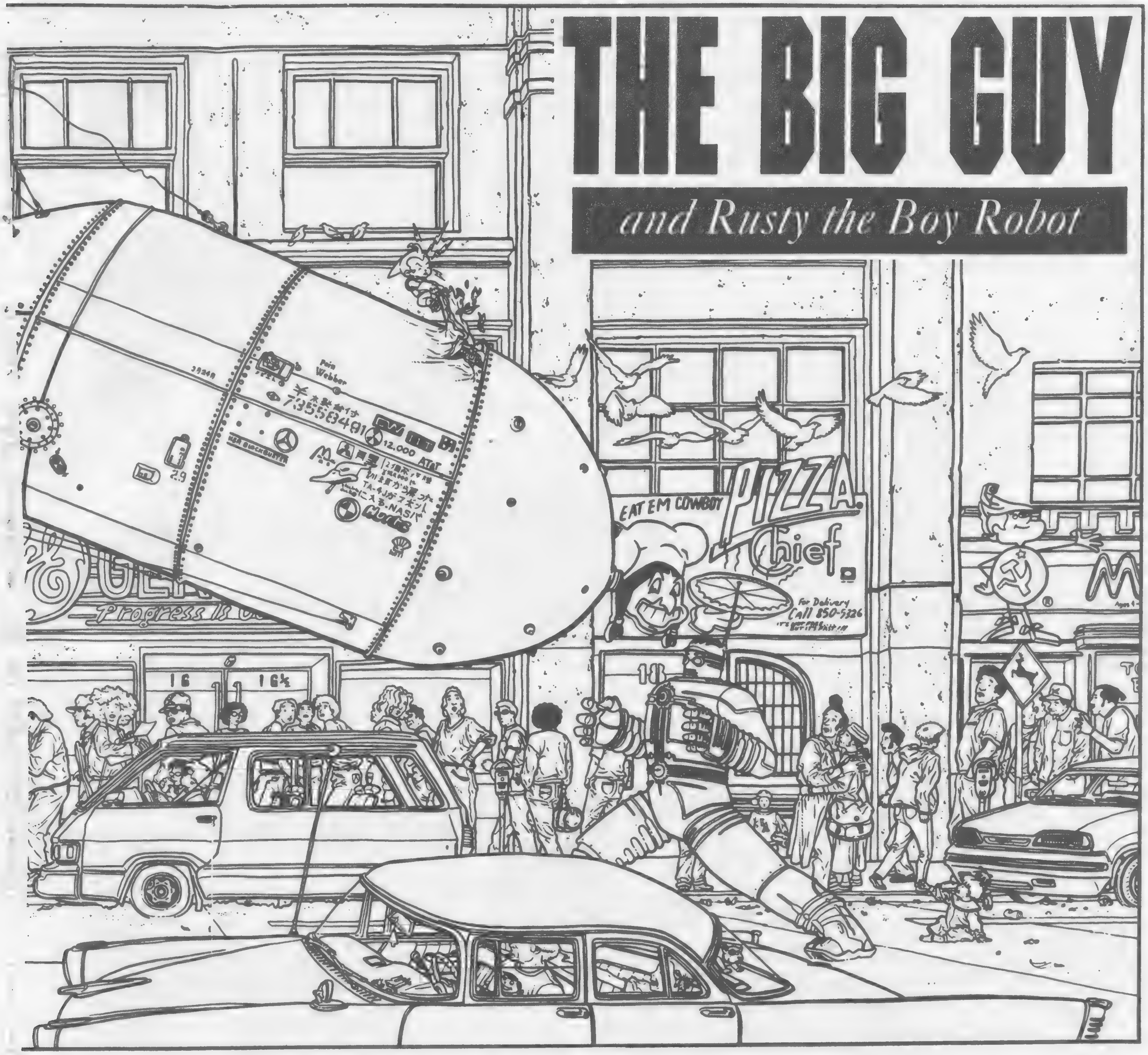
MARK: *Much of Matt’s motivation seems to stem from his father’s upbringing. Why hasn’t Matt considered becoming a father?*

FRANK: Well, he’d need to get married first, and he’s had a little bit of trouble with women over the years. *(Laughter.)* Not to be too glib, but I guess the main reason why these questions don’t come up is because these characters are so rarely allowed to age. They stay in a permanent state of 29, and that’s one of the tricks to writing them. That’s one of the reasons why I made Batman older — I couldn’t stand being older than Batman.

MARK: *Will there be any more Daredevil projects from you in the future?*

FRANK: There’s nothing in the works. And it’s kind of hard to see it. They seem to be junking the character, or at least radically transforming him. Also, it doesn’t sit well with me at all that they’ve

I made Batman older. I hated being older than Batman.”



brought back Elektra without even consulting me. I feel pretty burned about that. They had every legal right to do so, but it just was one of those lessons you learn about what it means when you create something and fall in love with it and let somebody else on it.

MARK: *If they offered you, would you like to work on Elektra again?*

FRANK: See above. *(Laughter.)* They have their philosophy that they're testing out to the fullest, that the artists are interchangeable and that the ideas are best kept as company property. But when you have created something, been associated with it, been the only writer to touch the character, and something like this happens, you don't really feel safe with the character anymore. So I'm not saying "Never again," but in reaction to current events I wouldn't think it's likely any time soon.

MARK: *That sounds like a case for creator ownership.*

FRANK: It sure is. And I'm glad I caught on as early as I did. Elektra is one of the few that I don't own. It's funny. There are two sides to this creator ownership business, and the other relates to the readers. I've been asked a number of times at conventions and such why people don't stay on books. It's a real concern readers have, because they like a particular person's work on a title, and then the person leaves after a year. Then they have to completely readjust. My answer has been that if it's one of the company-owned books, and you're investing that much of yourself in it, after a while you start to feel like a real jerk because you know you can be replaced. You know you have no long-term investment in it. All you have to do is look at everybody from **Jack Kirby** to **Chris Claremont** and you can see that there is no loyalty coming from the other side. The only thing I can really say is that I don't know a solution to this business about the company-owned books. I can guarantee that nobody else is going to do SIN CITY.

MARK: *So you'd follow Dave Sim's theory that creator ownership and even self-publishing is the way to go.*

FRANK: Well, I don't self-publish. Dark Horse publishes my work. That's just fine. I believe that ownership is essential, at least for somebody like me.

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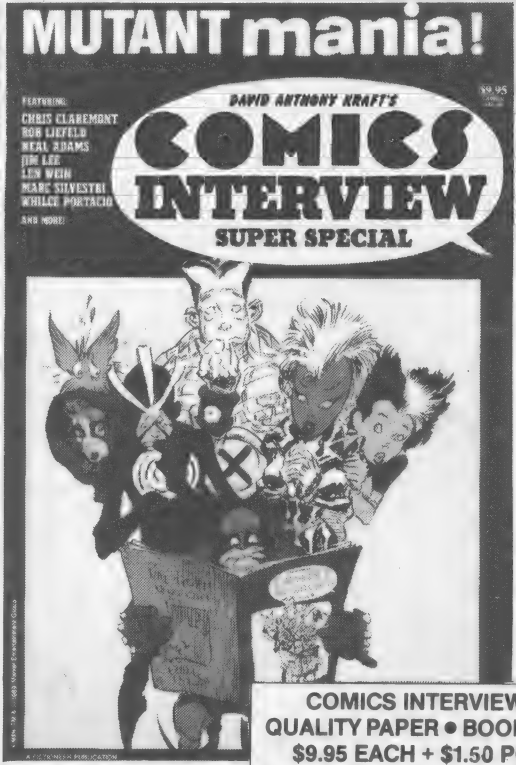
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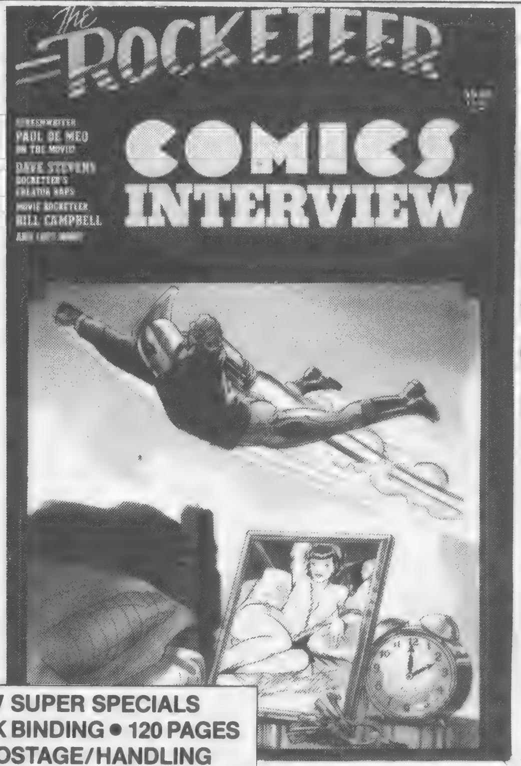
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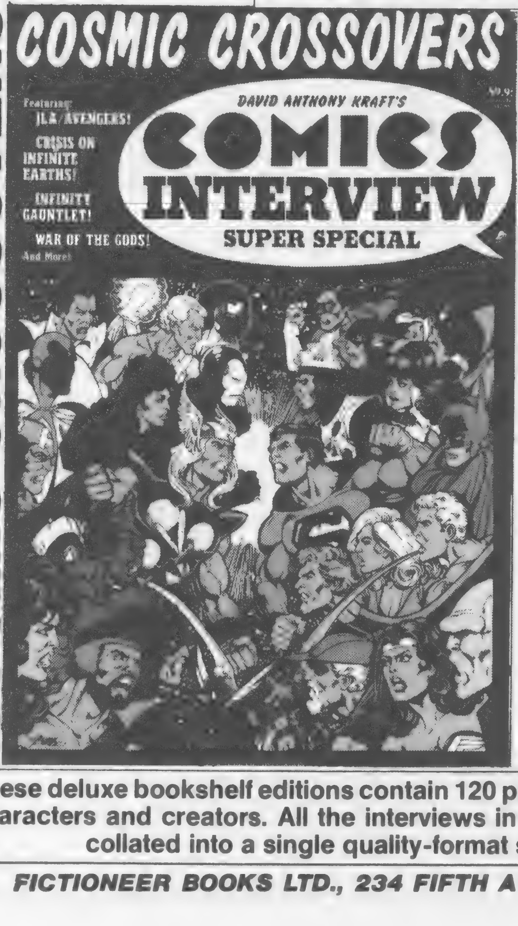
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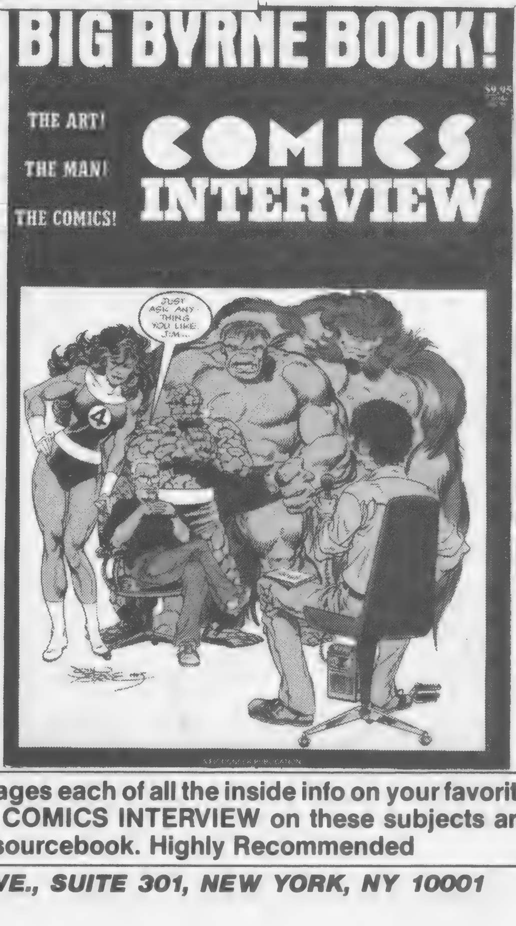
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"I avoid reading characters that I'm attached to."

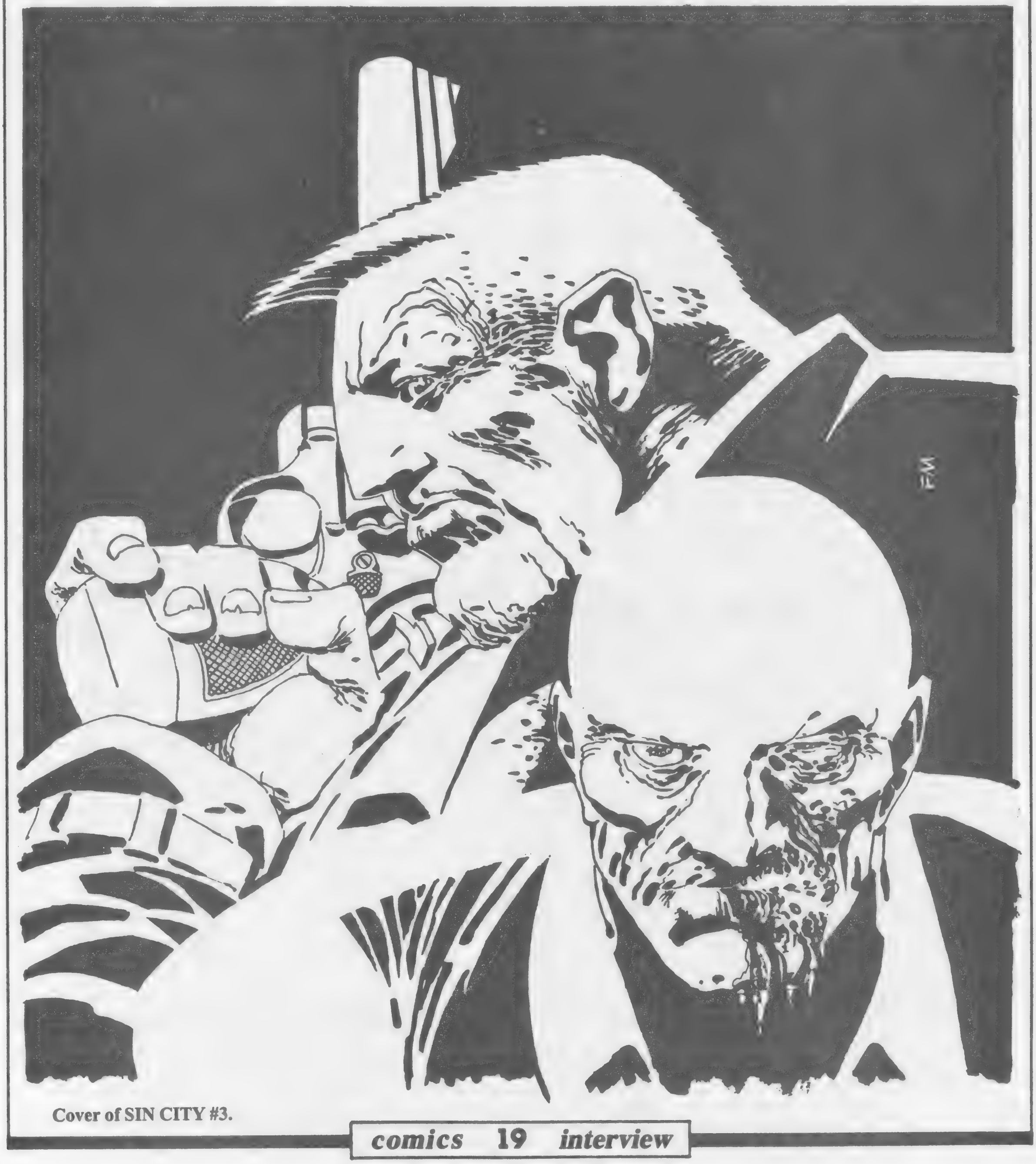
MARK: *Earlier, you were talking about the current goings-on in DAREDEVIL and what they're doing with him. What about Batman? What do you think about what they're doing with him over at DC now?*

FRANK: Well, I have to mitigate everything I have to say about either of them by saying that I haven't *read* stuff, I've just been told. I avoid reading characters that I'm attached to. I get fixed on my own point of view and I'm not going to agree with anybody else's. All I know is that Daredevil has some kind of new costume and they're bringing Elektra back. All I know is that they've got some new guy being Batman and Batman got his back broken.

MARK: *If you had control over the character — Batman — what would you like to do with him? What would you like to see?*

FRANK: Good question. I haven't really thought about that kind of involvement in the character for a long time. I got to do so much of what I wanted to do with Batman in YEAR ONE and DARK KNIGHT that I guess I'd refer you to those. I have my own view of the character. I think it worked. But as far as the ongoing monthly version of the character, I don't know. The ongoing monthly grinds tend to work against real character direction. Somebody's going to stay 29 forever and come out every month whether you have a good idea or not. Then it's much tougher to keep something interesting.

MARK: *You've been regarded as a key person behind the "darkening" of*



Cover of SIN CITY #3.

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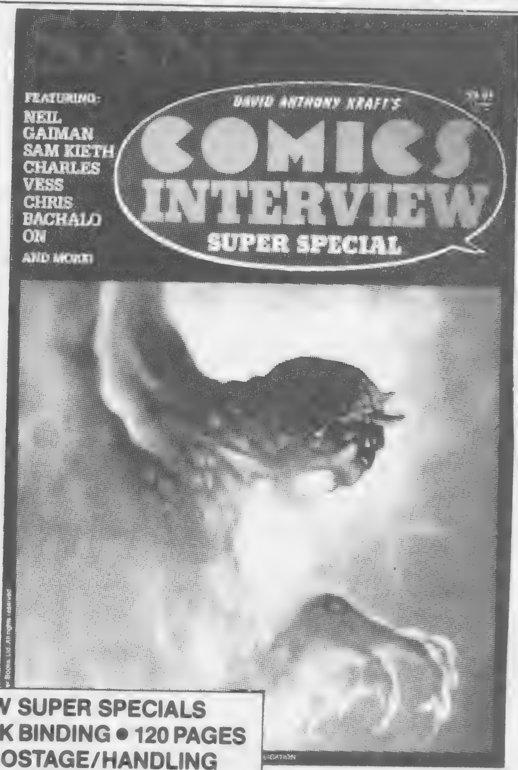
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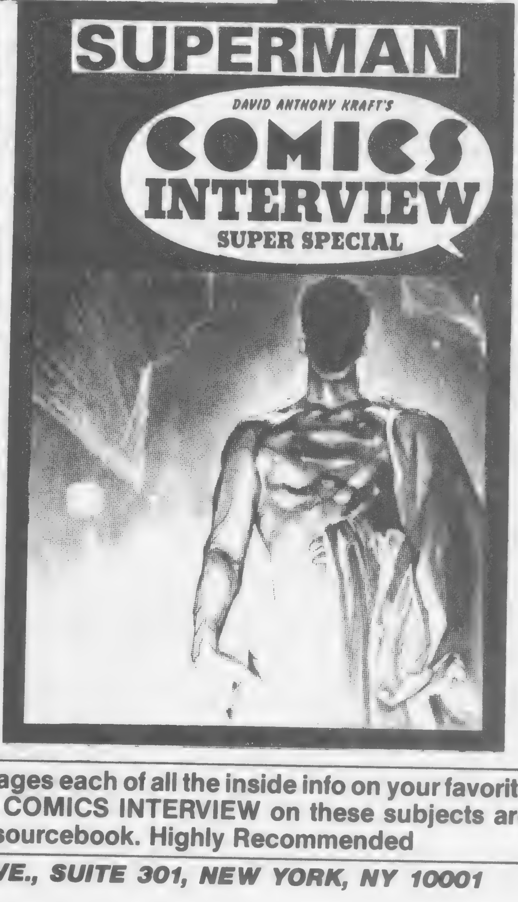
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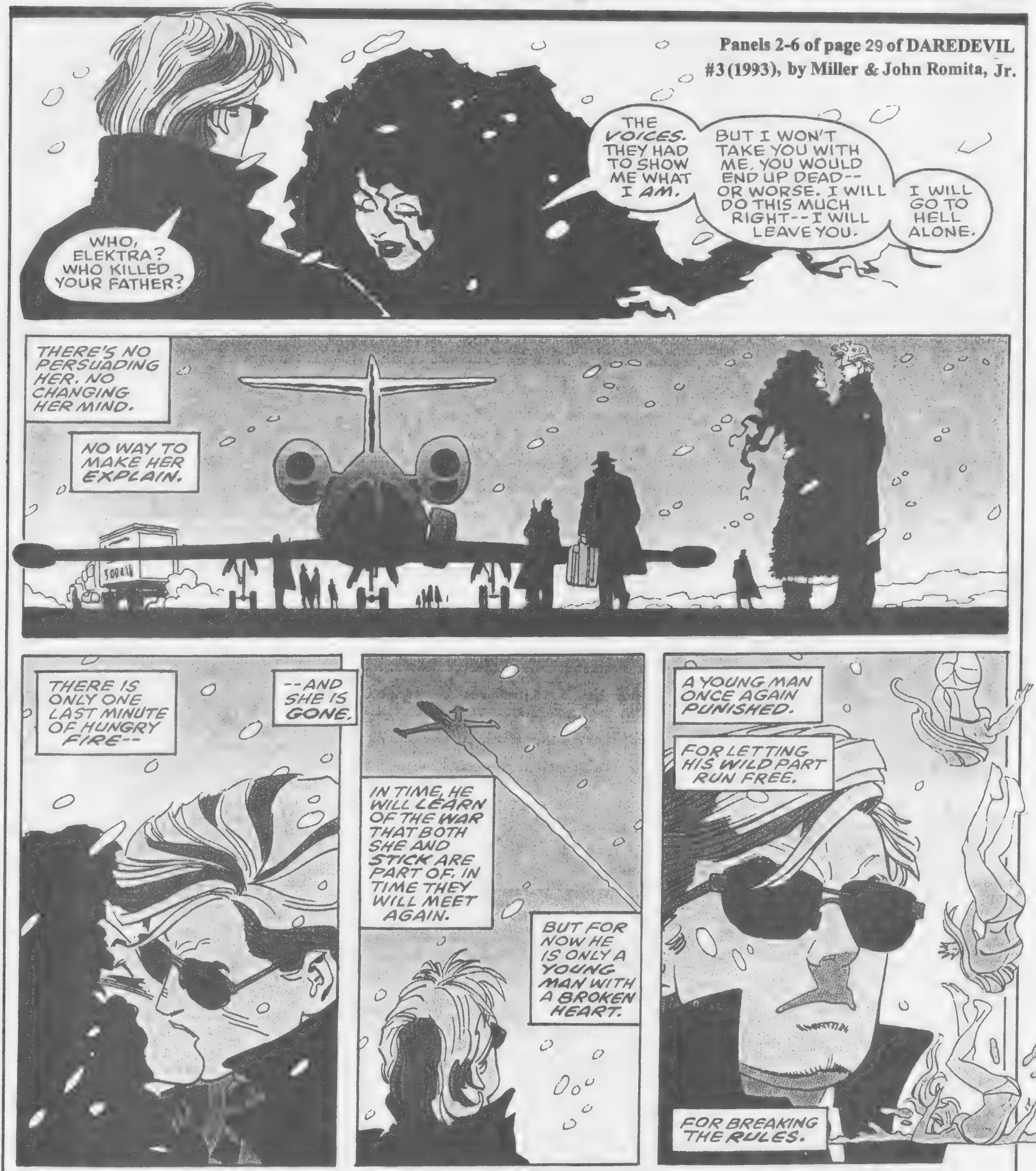
"I did DARK KNIGHT 7 years ago. I've learned a lot since."



Panels 2-6 of page 29 of DAREDEVIL #3 (1993), by Miller & John Romita, Jr.

WHO, ELEKTRA? WHO KILLED YOUR FATHER?
THE VOICES. THEY HAD TO SHOW ME WHAT I AM.
BUT I WON'T TAKE YOU WITH ME. YOU WOULD END UP DEAD-- OR WORSE. I WILL DO THIS MUCH RIGHT--I WILL LEAVE YOU.
I WILL GO TO HELL ALONE.
THERE'S NO PERSUADING HER. NO CHANGING HER MIND.
NO WAY TO MAKE HER EXPLAIN.
THERE IS ONLY ONE LAST MINUTE OF HUNGRY FIRE--
--AND SHE IS GONE.
IN TIME, HE WILL LEARN OF THE WAR THAT BOTH SHE AND STICK ARE PART OF. IN TIME THEY WILL MEET AGAIN.
BUT FOR NOW HE IS ONLY A YOUNG MAN WITH A BROKEN HEART.
A YOUNG MAN ONCE AGAIN PUNISHED.
FOR LETTING HIS WILD PART RUN FREE.
FOR BREAKING THE RULES.

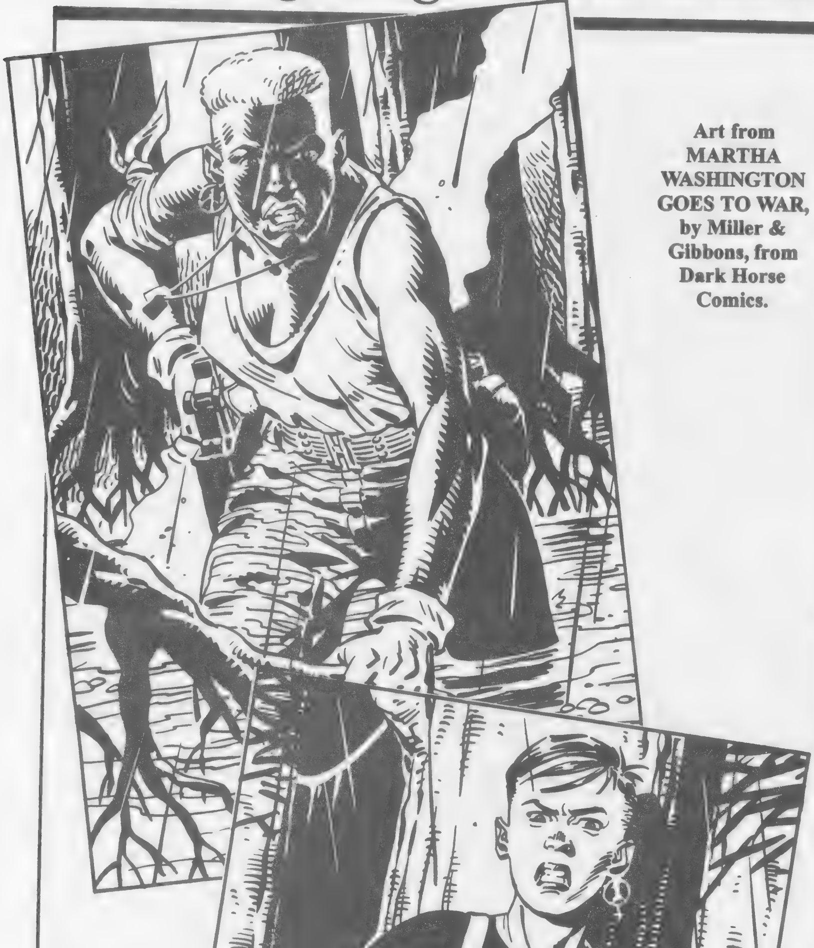
Batman as the Dark Knight. How do you see the whole movement following that of darkening characters?

FRANK: Darkened characters! They grit their teeth! Oh, I don't know. It's not my fault! *(Laughter.)* In the case of Batman, I felt I was just bringing him closer to a character that made sense. It was hard for me to believe somebody dressed up like a bat who threw criminals out of windows to be a well-balanced individual, let alone a very charitable liberal. These things didn't gel for me. I felt he had to be an obsessive man . . . and that he and Superman were the two epic characters in comics. I wanted him to be an operatic figure. But I don't think the kind of effort I made on Batman is something that would work well sustained on a monthly basis. As far as the darkening of characters, I've seen a fair amount of it. Some of it has been just plain silly. A lot of it has been whiny. I don't really feel it has that much to do with DARK KNIGHT.

MARK: *It seems that DARK KNIGHT is the project you're most remembered for. It's probably going to be recalled after your death. Do you think the work most illustrative of your career?*

FRANK: No. I did DARK KNIGHT seven years ago. I've learned a lot since. I have a lot of affection for it. I'm grateful

"I'm just getting started. As an artist and a writer."



Art from MARTHA WASHINGTON GOES TO WAR, by Miller & Gibbons, from Dark Horse Comics.

for what it did for my career. I'm very proud of it as a piece of work. But I'm just getting started. As an artist and a writer, I feel I'm really coming into my own.

MARK: *How do you feel you've made a lasting impact on the industry?*

FRANK: I'm still here! Lasting impact? Anybody who thinks about that kind of stuff is crazy, especially when they're still rolling along doing the stuff. Catch me when I'm in some retirement home.

MARK: *Let's move on to MARTHA WASHINGTON.*

FRANK: The title is MARTHA WASHINGTON GOES TO WAR. It begins two years after GIVE ME LIBERTY. Martha has been in the trenches of the second American Civil War for those two years. She's now 19 years old and she's tougher. She's really seen quite a bit more since we last saw her. She's involved in an adventure that involves a number of characters from GIVE ME LIBERTY, where she is seeking out a group of high-tech seditionists who are dismantling the infrastructure of the country. It's her mission to stop them. Among the seditionists is the closest thing to a romantic lead the book has had so far, the Apache from GIVE ME LIBERTY.

MARK: *How does the nation view her now?*

FRANK: She's referred to by an officer as one of the best-kept secrets of the Peace Force. She's a lieutenant now and she is, as she's always been, pragmatic, very very effective, and a total survivor. But it's important to keep in mind that Martha will never be famous. As Colonel Moretti said in the first series, she'll never make the history books. She will change history but not get proper credit. As far as the view of the nation toward her, her superior officers are very impressed, but almost no one's ever heard of her.

MARK: *Do you see yourself doing a series of mini-series on Martha?*

FRANK: Absolutely. The goal that Dave and I have is that we are going to tell her entire life. I believe and hope we will be able to come back and visit a lot more frequently in the future. The gap between the first and second series was very unfortunate. That's the way careers go; you get off on other things. At the end of this series, she's all of 19 years old. There are a lot more stories to tell.

MARK: *Do you have a definitive ending set for her life? Do you have her life planned out?*

FRANK: In my mind and in scribble on note pads. But there are a lot of stories to do between now and then. Anything can happen.

MARK: *You're also doing RUSTY THE BOY ROBOT AND THE BIG GUY with Geoff Darrow. Beyond the absolutely fun title, what's happening with that?*

FRANK: It's a tormented look at my

“Big Guy and Rusty. It’s going to be beautiful.”

childhood. It really is what it looks like. It’s a comic that Geoff and I are doing that we hope the kids will enjoy as well as adults. It’s about the Big Guy who’s an agent of the U.S. military who fights monsters and aliens and so forth. His sidekick, a gift from the Prime Minister of Japan, is Rusty the Boy Robot, who’s always trying to get the Big Guy to like him.

MARK: *And what happens?*

FRANK: That’s the premise of it. There will be monsters and aliens. This isn’t WAR AND PEACE.

MARK: *Geoff is known as a slow artist, his work being very detailed.*

FRANK: Although some people would argue that he’s the fastest artist in comics if you actually look at the pages. There’s so much on them that he must draw very quickly, even to produce at the pace he does.

MARK: *Should we expect this single series or will there be a continuous series of stories of Rusty?*

FRANK: The first story is two issues long. We’re going to publish it when it’s finished to make sure it stays on schedule. I’ve already planned the second story, but I’m not sure how many issues it’s going to be. But I think you can expect oneshots and mini-series of the Big Guy and Rusty. I think it could be a really fun book. I’ve seen the first issue’s art, and Geoff has outdone himself. It’s going to be a very beautiful book.

MARK: *This sounds like a unique project for you, as someone who’s associated with dark characters and gritty crime. Is this a cathartic outlet for you?*

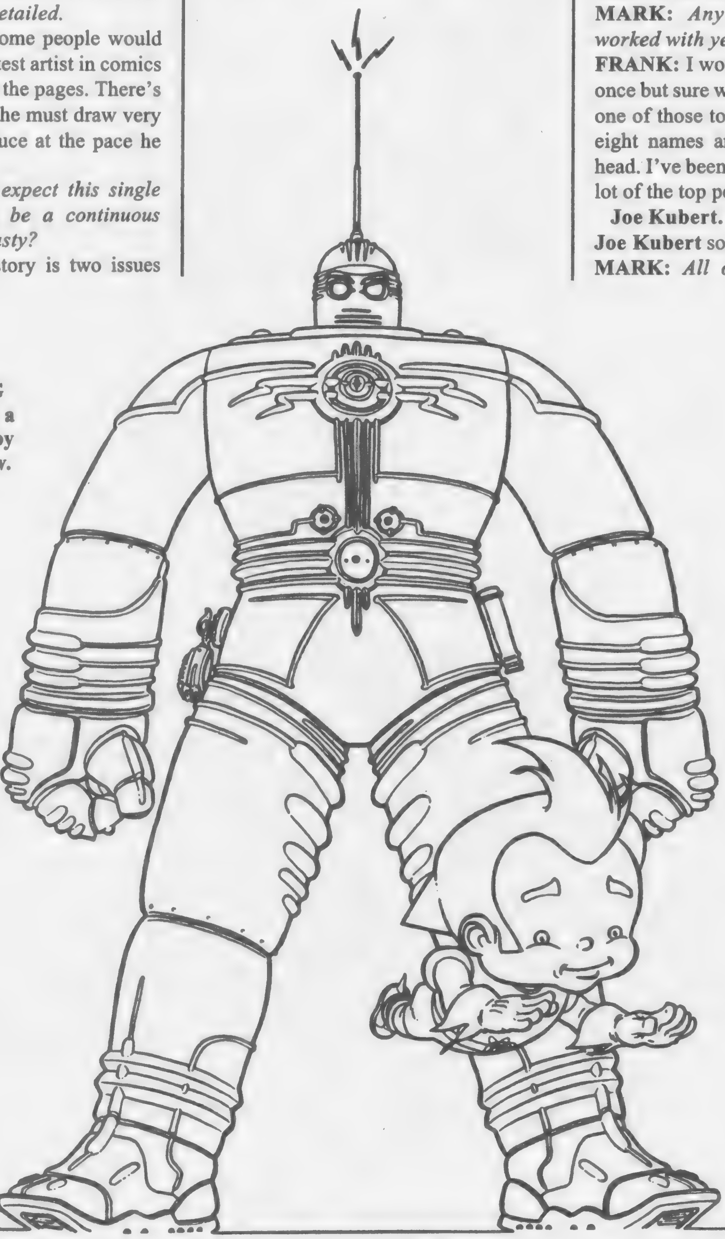
FRANK: It’s a desire to spread my wings a little further. For the past two years in particular, I’ve been looking to explore the different things comics can do. The total domination of the comic-book field by one genre is really kind of claustrophobic. I want to try different things. I also love the challenge of writing for kids. The way these things usually start is that **Geoff Darrow** got together with me and said he wanted to do something like this. I got all excited about the notion that it was more for kids. We took it from there.

MARK: *Any creators you haven’t worked with yet that you’d like to?*

FRANK: I worked with **John Buscema** once but sure would love to again. This is one of those tough questions where later eight names are going to pop into my head. I’ve been very lucky to work with a lot of the top people of my generation.

Joe Kubert. I would love to work with **Joe Kubert** sometime.

MARK: *All of your projects of late*



More from BIG GUY & RUSTY, a two-issue series by Miller & Darrow.

“Should I get to work with Lynn Varley again, I’m

you’ve written. Would you be interested in drawing another writer’s project?

FRANK: Not just now. I have too many stories I want to get to. I’m also doing a lot of drawing on SIN CITY. When I finish this SIN CITY, it’s more than likely I’m just going to start right up with the next one.

MARK: *Have you ever thought about writing pure fiction, without pictures?*

FRANK: Not really. What I love about comics is where the pictures and the words combine. Whether or not they’re my pictures, I think about that when I write. Comic-book writing is very different than writing for novels, just as comic-book art is as different as could be from illustration. Everything on a comic-book page is communication. The pictures, right down to the way you ink or letter them, all are geared to connect you to the readers, to tell them what’s going on, to make it dramatic.

MARK: *Your art of late, especially on SIN CITY, has been more of a study in shadows, almost film noir. You seem to be taking this to another extreme with each project you work on. How do you see this style developing?*

FRANK: Day by day. Page by page. I’m on the fourth issue of SIN CITY now, the one I’m happiest with so far. Some are more high contrast than others. Some scenes are more high contrast than others. Mostly, I’m playing with the black and white masses and trying to create a good language for storytelling with them.

MARK: *How do you feel now that other artists have aped this style?*

FRANK: A little bit flattered. I can’t complain too much about that one because what do I say when someone points out **Johnny Craig** or **Will Eisner**? I would advise them to dig out **Johnny Craig** and **Will Eisner** and study them.

MARK: *Are you interested in trying different styles beyond this?*

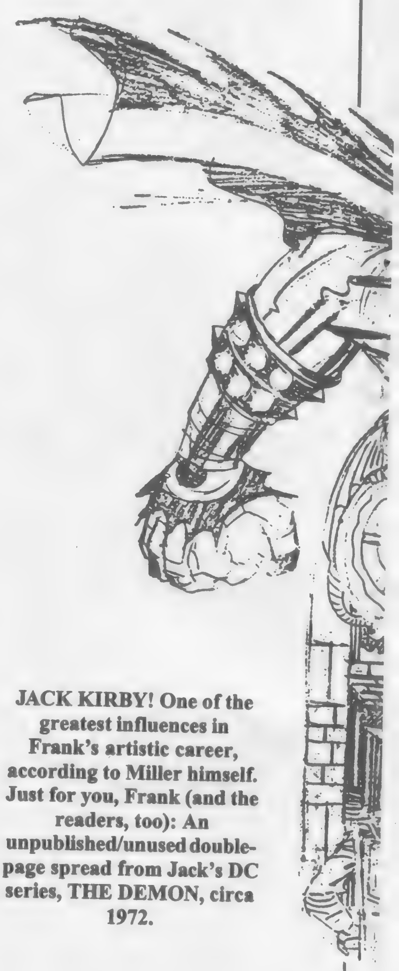
FRANK: Oh yeah. This is a look I developed for SIN CITY. If you look over my work, you’ll see that I try different things fairly frequently. I tailor my approach to the book I’m doing. I’ve got other books I want to draw that would look quite different than SIN CITY. At least to me they’d look different.

MARK: *How so?*

FRANK: For one thing, SIN CITY’s in black and white. So it has to achieve everything it’s going to achieve with black. That means using black to its maximum power. However, should I get to work with **Lynn Varley** again, for instance, I’m going to want to, once again, let color do a huge amount of the work. Also, should I do, say, an ancient battle story, I’ll develop a look for it that will make that story as dramatic as possible, the same way as if one were filming a movie, one would adjust one’s pace and style to the difference between doing an epic or a melodrama.

MARK: *Where do you see yourself in five years?*

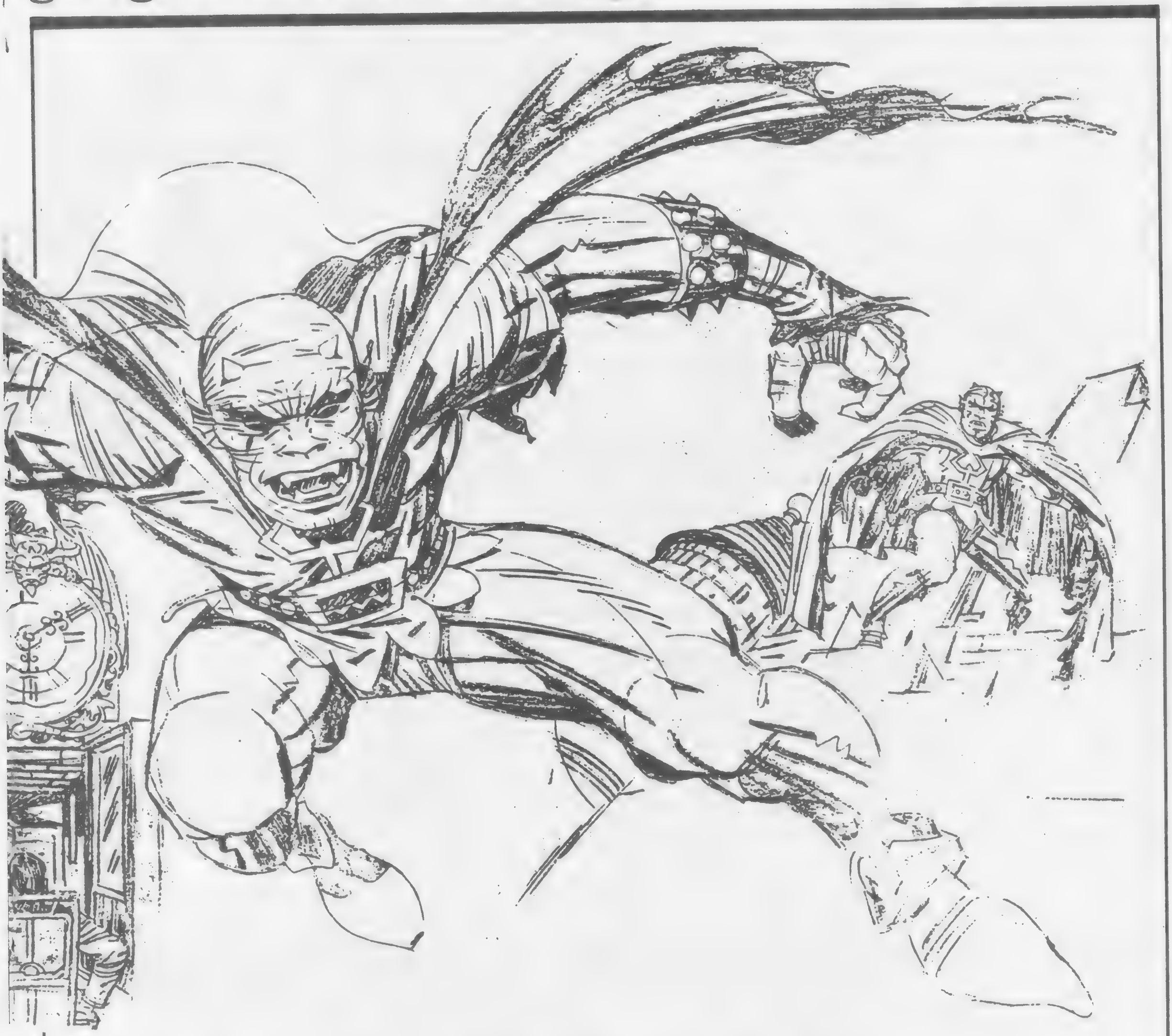
FRANK: I’m not thinking that far ahead. I’d be working on SIN CITY XXII. Right now, I’m just having so much fun doing



JACK KIRBY! One of the greatest influences in Frank’s artistic career, according to Miller himself. Just for you, Frank (and the readers, too): An unpublished/unused double-page spread from Jack’s DC series, THE DEMON, circa 1972.

Yeah, this is the BIG GUY again, from Dark Horse Comics.

going to let color do a huge amount of the work."



what I'm doing that I see no reason to stop.

MARK: *And it shows. Where do you think the industry will be in by the year 2000?*

FRANK: At this point, it's kind of hard to tell where it will be next month. Hope, I can tell you. What I think you'll start seeing as soon as next year is a much greater diversity starting to happen. I'm not saying overnight the face of the industry is going to be changed. But I think everyone was led a little bit astray by the spectacular boom and the superhero-universe-of-the-month club. I think, in a way, that was a flying leap backwards for the field. Now I'm hoping we can actually move forward to where you see more of the stamp of the individual cartoonist on the work. You see that personality running through it, so people are doing stuff they really want to do. And a much wider field in terms of content.

MARK: *Todd McFarlane, in particular, is one of the creators who's achieved mass stardom based on his name and his style. When he attends conventions, he's mobbed almost like a rock star. How are you handling the attention and "fame" of being Frank Miller?*

FRANK: If I go to a shop or show and be paid for that kind of attention, it's a wonderful thing. I'm very fortunate. Basically, the only way I try to handle it is that I try to be courteous and friendly to people and hope I can answer whatever questions they have. As far as handling the fame, it's not really like being a rock star. *(Laughter.)*

MARK: *In some ways, you're the spokesman for comics, as you receive a lot of mass media attention outside of the comics industry.*

FRANK: Mostly what I try to do is get them past the prejudices, try to get them to think of comics as one more form that's out there, a companion form to literature or, at the very least, as a unique little patch of popular culture where things happen that don't happen anywhere else. Then it's just a matter of showing them people's drawings and showing them the kinds of comics that have been done that are really worthwhile. The rest does itself most of the time. I don't feel like a spokesman but a very enthusiastic participant.

MARK: *Did you ever foresee this whole life you've led?*

FRANK: In detail, no. In intent, absolutely. I made up my mind when I was eight years old that this was what I was going to do.

MARK: *You're living out your dream?*

FRANK: Yeah.

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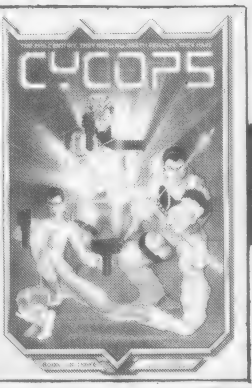

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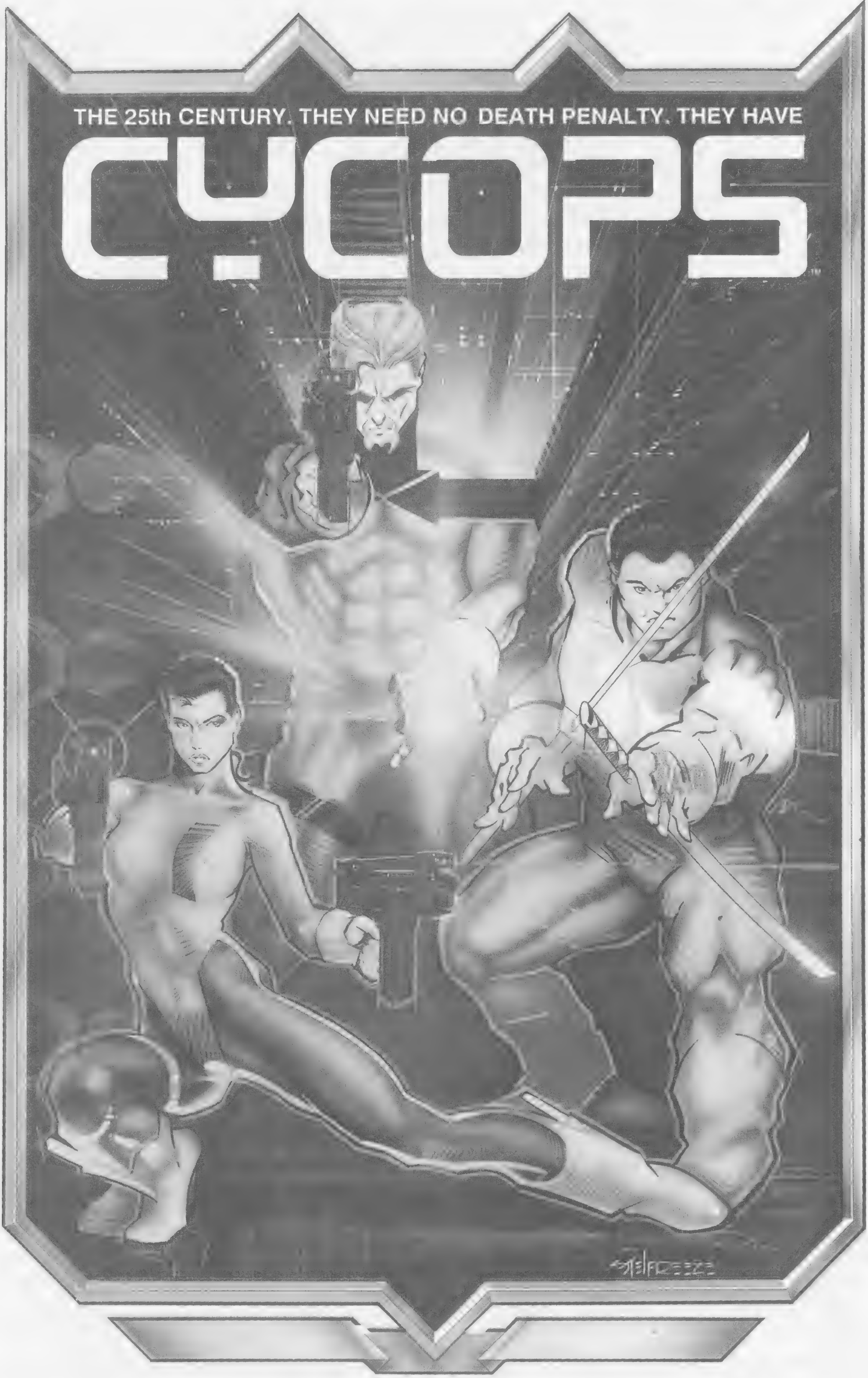
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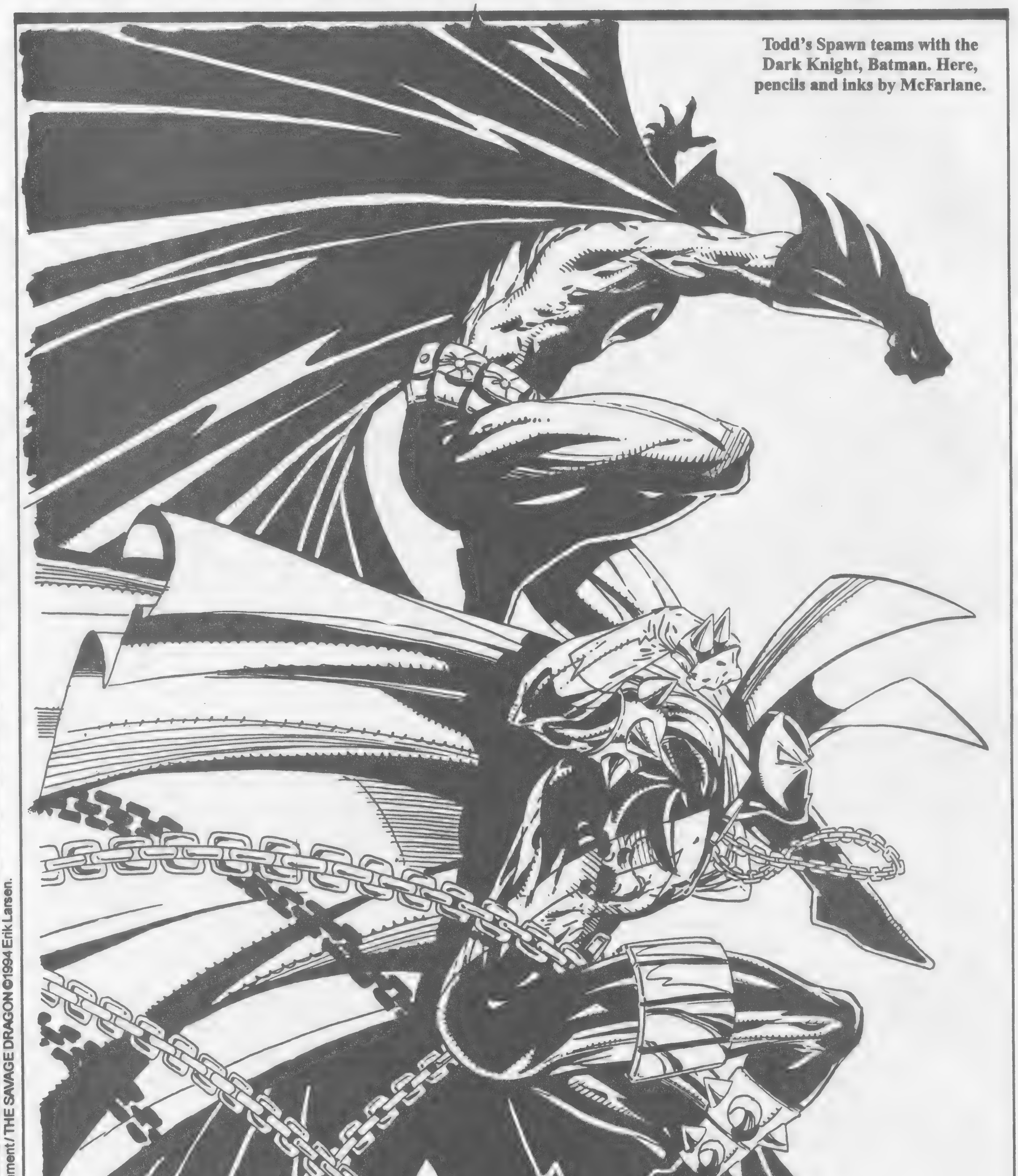
“Marvel wasn’t in a mood to talk. The only other



Todd’s Spawn teams with the Dark Knight, Batman. Here, pencils and inks by McFarlane.

BATMAN TM & ©1994 DC Comics, Inc. / SPAWN ©1994 Todd McFarlane / THOR and THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN TM & ©1994 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. / CYBERFORCE ©1994 Top Cow Productions, Inc. / JURASSIC PARK ©1994 Universal City Studios, Inc. & Amblin Entertainment / THE SAVAGE DRAGON ©1994 Erik Larsen.

character I'd have an interest in is Batman."

Ask a comics fan who the current "hot" creators are and he'll undoubtedly name Todd McFarlane almost immediately. As one of the industry's most outspoken figures, Todd is also one of the industry's most influential talents, an individual who's risen to heights of superstardom in the comics industry undreamt of just a few years ago. From his early work on Batman to his redefining role on Spider-Man to his current efforts with his own creation, Spawn, McFarlane has steadily built a large fan following with his own individual style. Nevertheless, he's been consistently criticized for his public statements and actions. Todd sat down with us to set the record straight, to discuss his public image, the state of the comics industry, the future of Spawn, and the upcoming BATMAN/SPAWN cross-over he's working on with Frank Miller . . .

VITAL STATISTICS

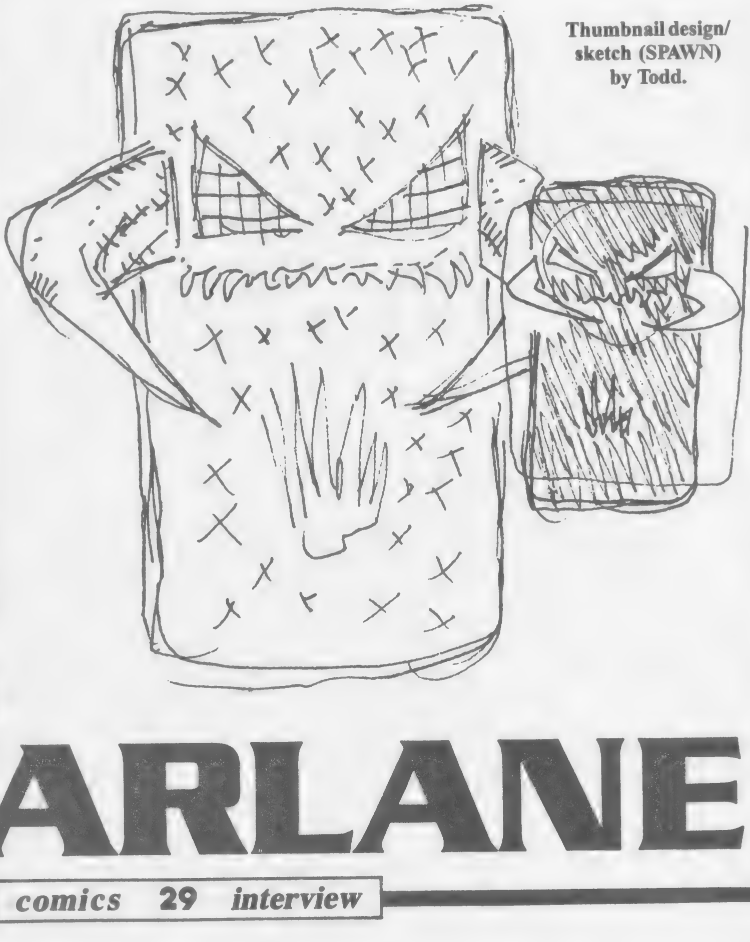
Name: Todd McFarlane
Born: 1961, Calgary, Alberta, Canada
Current Residence: Portland, Oregon
Education: College graduate, Graphic Arts degree
Greatest Influences: My mom and dad, my wife and child, and a guy like **Wayne Gretzky**. In terms of comics, **John Byrne, Frank Miller, George Perez,** and **Rob Liefeld.**
Books Enjoying Now: The sports page, CEREBUS, and THE SAVAGE DRAGON (fun for the sake of being fun).
Who'll win the Stanley Cup: Not my teams. They get so many teams now. Everybody's taking the safe pick with Pittsburgh. I could see St. Louis pull it out. There are too many good teams now. In the last two weeks of the playoffs, they might pull it out. I just like to watch from a distance and root for a couple of my teams.

MARK LUCAS: *BATMAN/SPAWN — why this project? Why now?*

TODD McFARLANE: At the first San Diego Con after I left Marvel, I remember some of the guys at Image and **Bob Wayne** at DC announced an Image/DC crossover coming. This was three years ago. I was the only guy out of the group going. "I'm not going to do no cross-overs," because when we broke away (from Marvel) I was pretty militant. I wasn't going to work for anybody, no how, no way. I'm going to stay here. Later on, the guys at Image did some stuff with Valiant which was the DEATHMATE crossover. They wanted me to do that one too and, again, I was, "I'm not going to work for anybody else. Why would I want to put money in anybody else's pocket?" About the time that DEATHMATE got rolling along, I had a conversation with **Neal Adams**. Neal in some respects fought for some of the same things that I did, told me that, when he was trying to start his union years ago (he was somewhat "militant" too), he passed up opportunities to do stuff. Forget where the money was going to, forget who he worked for, it would have been creatively kind of cool to do it. He said he passed up some fun projects. This from a guy now saying that in hindsight. I was thinking, "Hmmm. Good working advice." I'd hate to be there 40 years old one day going, "I could have done all these cool things." At that time I said, "Okay, I can do the Valiant thing." But it was already underway, so I went to find something that would be more to my liking anyway. The Valiant characters I know nothing about. The obvious choice at that point was to go for somebody big. I knew Marvel wasn't really in the mood to talk to me. The only other character I'd have an interest in doing was Batman. So, I went for the jugular. If you're going to crossover, crossover big.

MARK: *Did you approach them or they approach you?*

TODD: I phoned them up with a deal that, basically, they do a book, they get Spawn, they get to do whatever they want, and advertise it however they want. Have their cake. And, I do a book that's unrelated to theirs and I get to have



Thumbnail design/ sketch (SPAWN) by Todd.

TODD McFARLANE

“I forgot to mention the guy who did DARK

Batman. I get to promote it however I want with whoever I want on the book. Basically, it was like a foot race. You get a book with these two characters. I get a book with these two characters. The story isn't connected. Let's see who puts out the best product. I think I'll put out the best product. I hope they think they'll put out the best one. But, again, being a little bit competitive, I think it'll raise the level of both books so that both books will be good for the kids.

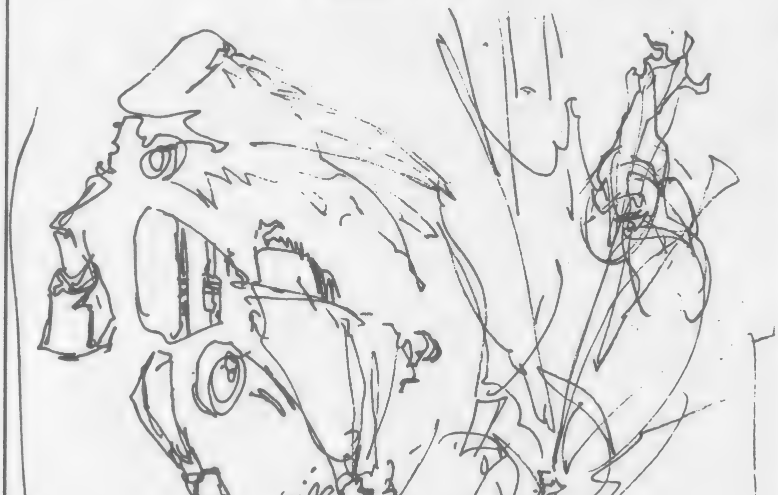
MARK: *What's the story of your BATMAN/SPAWN. What happens in it?*

TODD: It's not going to be fire and brimstone or anything like that. It's going to be as down-to-earth as it can be considering that it's a comic book. Spawn has a history of being a military commando. And, Batman's pretty urbane. So, we're going to try to keep it as urban as possible given we're mixing the element of some winos who are being experimented on and turned into cyborgs. But, it's going to have more of a military slant to it. There isn't going to be a Joker or a Penguin or a Violator or any of that.

MARK: *How did Frank Miller become involved?*

TODD: He's actually been involved for a long time. We just both kept it a secret. I think that he finally said he'd do it 7-8 months ago. The one good thing about being where I'm at right now with Image comics is that I get to control my own destiny. Part of the destiny is that I get to control marketing. I knew that if I said, "Spawn! Batman! **McFarlane!**" that people would be interested in that. They'd buy it. They'd get excited. So, I let that trickle out, but I had Frank on it at that point. Frank and I thought we'd hold off on his name so that, why give them all the information right now? If I were to announce Frank when I got him . . . you know the attention span of readers and dealers and distributors. You're better off to give them information as close to ordering as possible. When you drag it out, they get excited, but they don't get excited for eight months. I had a plan that I'd put out the book with three pieces of information, which I thought was enough. Get people excited. Again, they think, "Yeah, this is cool." But, just before the ordering comes out, and just before all the distributors produce their catalogues, drop the one piece of information that I neglected to tell everybody that was a calculated neglect. "Oh, by the way, since you're excited up to a level of 3, let me pop it up to a level of 6 here. I forgot to mention that the guy who did DARK KNIGHT and who basically established a lot of new things for Batman is going to do the Batman character." Plus, it gives Frank a chance to come back to the character he's always loved, and he doesn't have to work with DC, technically. I phoned him up and go, "If I can get you to write Batman, and you don't have to work for DC, would you do it?" "Uh, how you going to do that, Todd?" "Aw, just watch me!"

Another rare example of Todd's thumbnail sketches. All the information and dynamics are there.



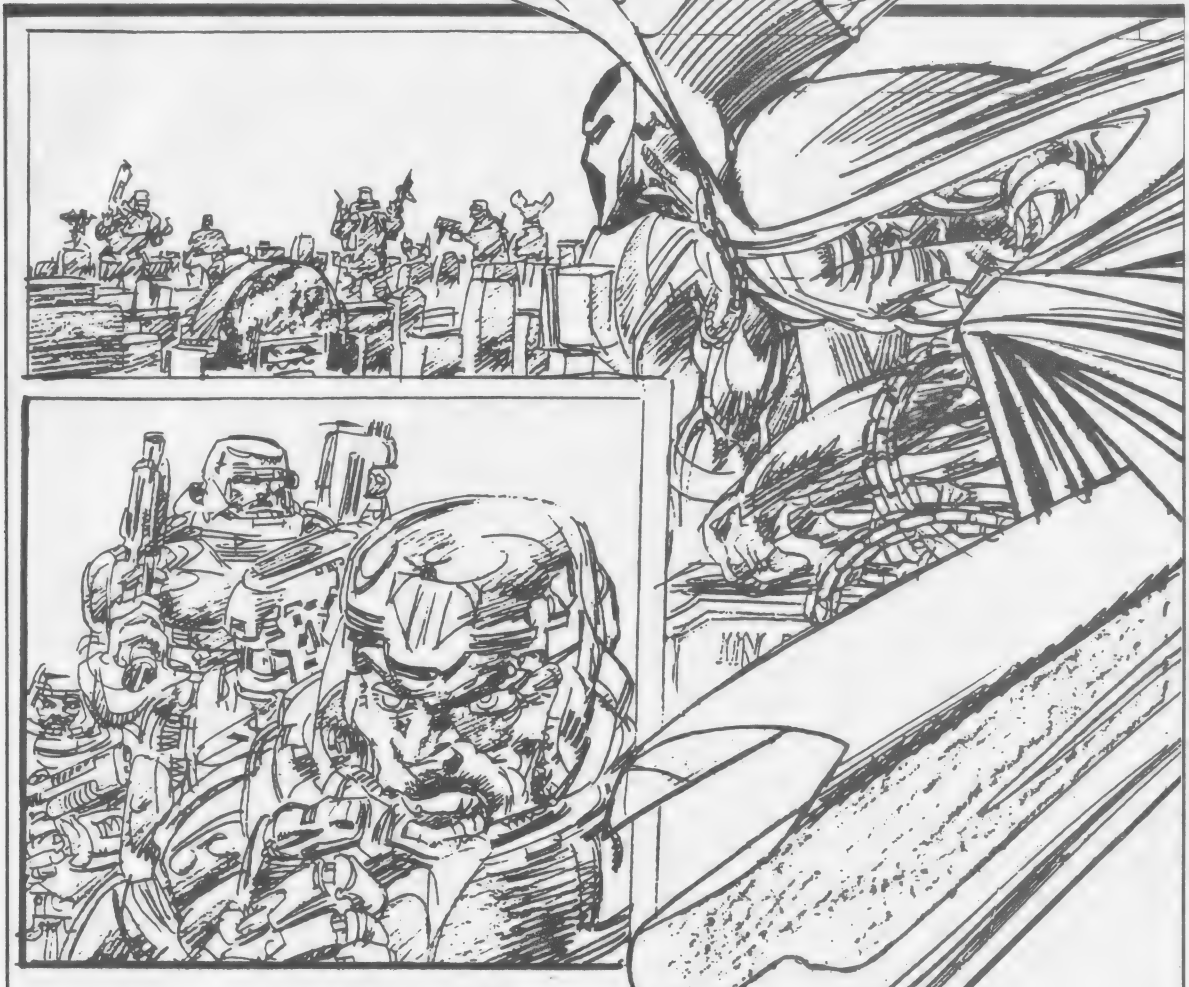
MARK: *What can you tell us about the DC edition? There's been very little publicity on their book.*

TODD: From what I know, the writers are going to be **Doug Moench, Alan Grant** and **Chuck Dixon**. I think they're the three guys who are doing the Batman books right now. I think **Denny O'Neil** wanted to keep a core group of people who are familiar with Batman right now and (let them do it) as a gesture of loyalty. The book's 45 pages and they split each guy up 15 pages, though it's not three chapters — it's going to be written seamlessly. The artwork is going to be pencils and inks by **Klaus Janson.** In a roundabout way, it's a connection to DARK KNIGHT RETURNS.

MARK: *How does it feel loaning out your character, your "baby" to other people?*

TODD: If it was in context with the continuity of SPAWN, then I'd have a lot bigger problem with it. So, while I'm doing the SPAWN/BATMAN, I have **Greg Capullo** and **Grant Morrison** working on the SPAWN book. I'm more concerned about that because it ties

KNIGHT is going [illegible] the Batman character.”



Neal Adams' pencils for Todd's SPAWN.

directly into the momentum of SPAWN, the comic book. Essentially, because the book of theirs is not really related to SPAWN, the regular book, and it's not related to my book, I don't see where, good or bad, it's going to have any lasting effect. So, I can feel more lax about it, too. If anything, I think they're getting the short end of the stick. I can theoretically read 700 issues of BATMAN comics and try to figure out something cool about Batman, whereas they only have 10 issues of SPAWN to work from, so they're working from less information than I am. But, I'm sure they're not going to do anything stupid. I've seen the story. I know they haven't. I'm relaxed. They're professional.

MARK: *How was it returning to Batman, a character you probably haven't done in 6-7 years?*

TODD: It took awhile to get into him and figure out exactly what way I wanted to play him. However, since Frank's handling the story, I just need to figure out a way to deal with the graphics of him. How can I make his cape have a different personality than the cape of Spawn? How menacing do I want to present him? How much do I want to have him in the shadows? I just want to go for those cool visual effects and try to give the people a book with the same coloring that they're used to (on SPAWN). In terms of getting into him, I'm not nervous. I've been doing capes now for the last couple of years. I've got enough on that. I think he's a cool character, given all the characters out there. If anything, the only challenge I'll have is trying to fit those two guys with their capes on the same page and not make it look too complicated.

MARK: *The battle of the duelling capes.*

TODD: Yeah. Technically, I'm going to try to give each cape a personality of its own. Spawn's, I've drawn it so it's always shooting out, the wind's always blowing at it. It's a majestic cape. Batman's, I'll make more so it's coming down to the ground before it actually starts to come back up. If they're both shooting up in the air majestically, we're going to have trouble. So, I'll probably have Batman's cape more creepy, coming down, slithering on the ground, and shooting back up. Of course, when he's up in the air, I'll have it all over the place.

MARK: *Do you foresee doing any more crossovers like this?*

TODD: We'll see how it goes. I've talked to **Paul Levitz**. Depending on the success of this book, there'd be a lot of factors. Does it sell? Yeah, it's going to sell. That's not even a given right now. More importantly, do all the parties get along at the end of it. Is there any resentment? If it goes over, I don't see a reason why we couldn't do a Spawn/Batman kind of annual event where I take a couple of issues of SPAWN. I wouldn't mind doing a Spawn/Spider-Man one day. Go back

"My philosophy was, I couldn't quit alone. Adams

home, being that I could still draw that character.

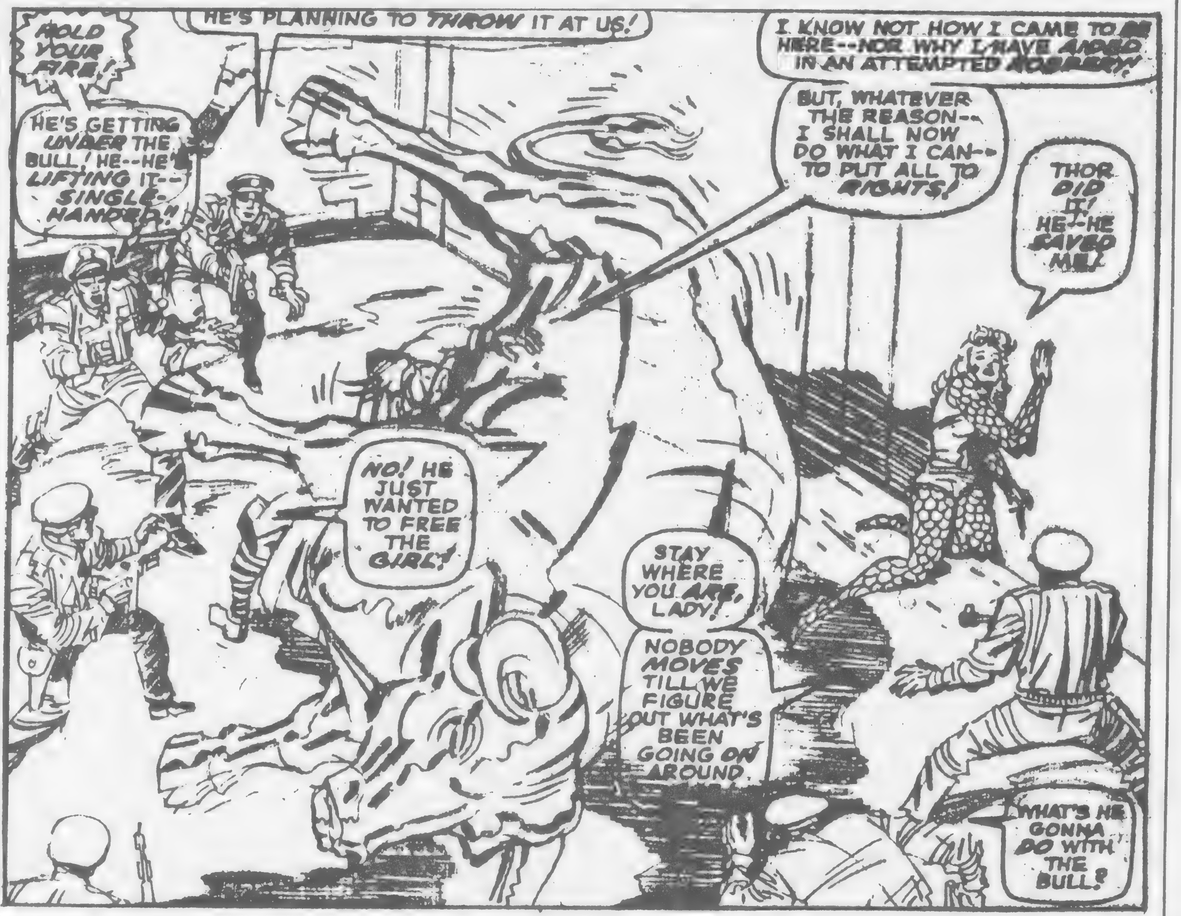
MARK: *Before you left Marvel, you were rumored to be doing a Batman/Lobo project. Whatever became of this?*

TODD: I was the first guy to quit out of the core seven of the Image group. I knew that I was quitting SPIDER-MAN when my first child was born. I was biding my time until they were ready. We'd always been talking, and I'd been pushing people. My philosophy was, when I quit I couldn't quit alone. **Neal Adams** has done it. **Frank Miller's** done it. **Alan Moore's** done it. **Jack Kirby's** done it. **Steve Ditko's** done it. I could go on and on. The only difference between what we did and what they did — we're not any more talented — is that I figured there were strength in numbers. I went, "Guys, if those guys couldn't quit and establish something on their own singularly . . . I'm talking about to change the industry, not to succeed in this industry. They're not going to care if **Todd McFarlane** leaves. They're not going to care if you and that other guy leaves. They'll care if we leave as a unit." So, since every guy was committed to other projects, I was going to bide my time. I was talking about a possible Venom mini-series. I talked to them about that because I wasn't able to do Venom when I was doing SPIDER-MAN, the book that I was writing. Then I went over to DC and see if we could do their two hottest characters at the time: Batman and Lobo. It would've worked. But, some of the other guys ended up quitting a little bit quicker than I thought they would, jumping on board faster, so I didn't have to do a "bide my time" project.

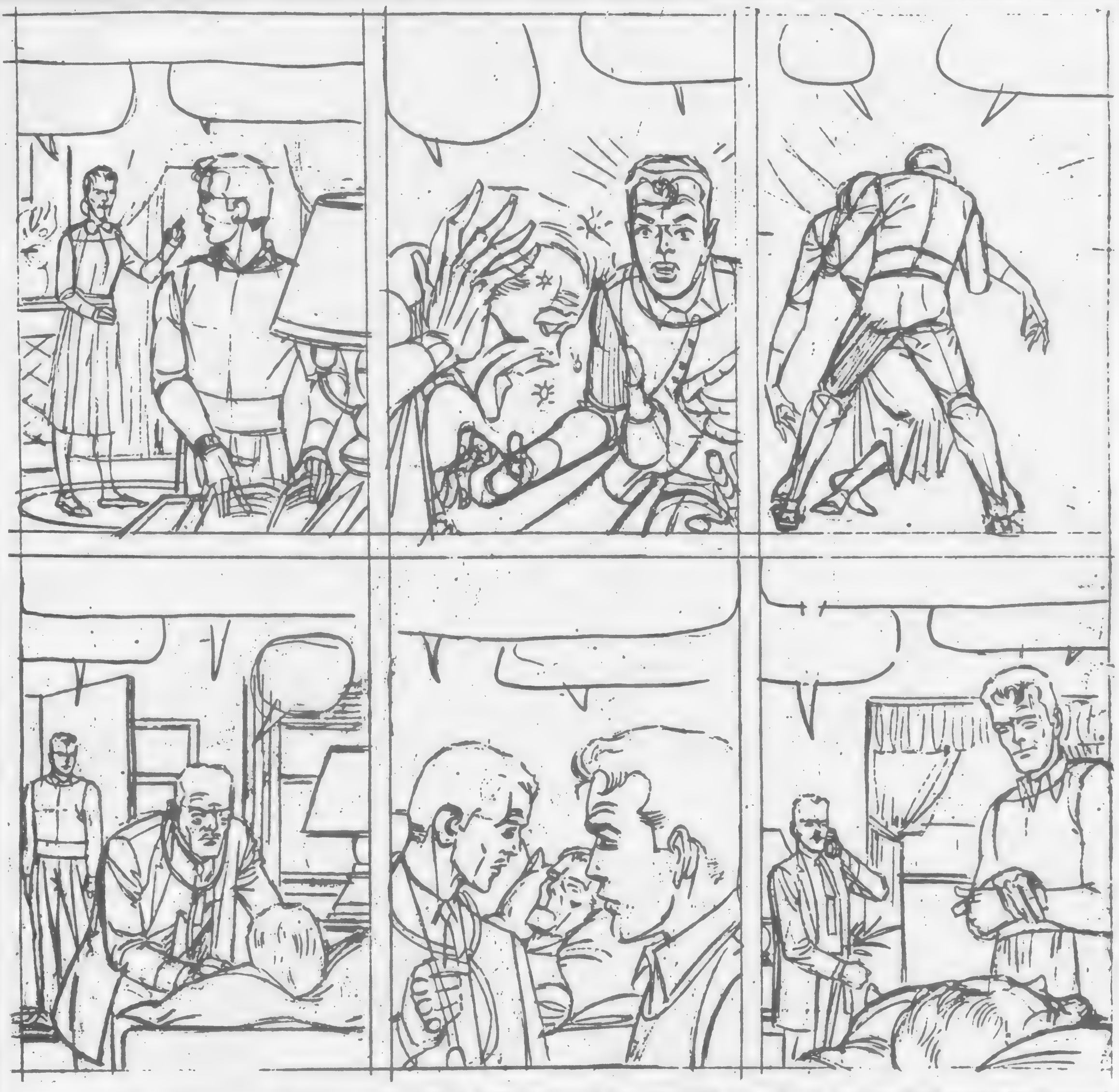
MARK: *Let's move on to SPAWN. You'll be returning with issue #19. What do you have planned? What do we have to look forward to?*

TODD: Issue #19 is going to be about a guy who thinks he's a hero, and Spawn thinks he's a hero because he doesn't have the information. But, he's actually a psycho with multiple personalities. Issue #20 is an issue that's told from the "evil entity" or devil (the guy who made the deal with Al Simmons) and we get a little more information on how he made the deal. There's still a lot of stuff I've been ambiguous about that a lot of 12-year-old kids write in asking, what does this or that mean. So, I'll have to spell out a few more things in that issue. After that, I want to bring in a couple of major bad guys. I've also been playing with the plot threads right now. The CIA thinks that Al Simmon's buddy is the one that's been disrupting several things because all the clues lead to his buddy. Nobody would think that a dead man's doing all this stuff, which is Spawn's greatest ally right now. Nobody would think that a guy returning from the dead is the one causing all the crap. I have a couple of detectives hounding him down. The mafia is going to get back on his trail. As well as the CIA people. I'm going to try to pull off a semi-complicated 3-4 part story where all

More rarities — pencils by Jack Kirby, from THOR #147, 1967, page 2. These were later inked by the late Vince Colletta.


HOLD YOUR FIRE!
HE'S PLANNING TO THROW IT AT US!
HE'S GETTING UNDER THE BULL! HE--HE'S LIFTING IT--SINGLE-HANDED!!
I KNOW NOT HOW I CAME TO BE HERE--NOR WHY I HAVE AIDED IN AN ATTEMPTED ROBBERY!
BUT, WHATEVER THE REASON-- I SHALL NOW DO WHAT I CAN-- TO PUT ALL TO RIGHTS!
THOR DID IT! HE--HE SAVED ME!
NO! HE JUST WANTED TO FREE THE GIRL!
STAY WHERE YOU ARE, LADY!
NOBODY MOVES TILL WE FIGURE OUT WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON AROUND
WHAT'S HE GONNA DO WITH THE BULL?

has done it. Kirby 's done it. Ditko's done it."



Even rarer! Steve Ditko pencils!! From AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #31, 1965. ("I never knew any pencilled copies ever existed for any Spiderman pages." Steve Ditko, 1993.)

those things come into play, along with the safety of his wife and her child, and get into a big, convoluted story that has to be sorted out. At the end of it, somebody might actually know he's alive and back from the dead.

MARK: *When is Spawn going to confront his ex-wife?*

TODD: I don't know right now. Again, what he's found out so far is that his wife is happy. She's happily married to Al Simmon's best friend. I try to project this stuff on me. If I came back from something and my wife thought I was dead but she's married to my best friend . . . I'm thinking, if anybody else other than me is going to be around my wife to make sure somebody's there, I would want it to be my best friend. So, she's married to a good guy. It's not like she's married to his killer or something out of Hollywood. And, he wasn't ever able to give her children (I haven't played it up that big but it's an important part). He wasn't able to give her children, and children was a big part of what she wanted. They tried when they were married. But, now when he comes back, she's re-married to a good guy and she has a child, the thing that was important to her. So, he has to make the decision that now he can't turn back into what he was (he looks like a burnt hamburger). The best he could do is put some skin on himself and look like a white Beach Boy. But, I haven't got to this point: that skin rots like every 48 hours which is why he keeps living in the alleyways. I'm surprised more people haven't asked why he just doesn't convert to the white guy and go get a job. He can't because he actually rots. With all those things there, he has to stand there and decide, would you go and disrupt your wife's life at this point? For all intents and purposes, she's over your death. And, she's happy. What would it accomplish at this point other than you wanting her back to tell her you're alive. It would just mess up her life. Spawn has to come to grips with that answer. I don't know what the final answer is. Maybe I'll have a story

"When everybody was doing foil covers, I said fuck foil."

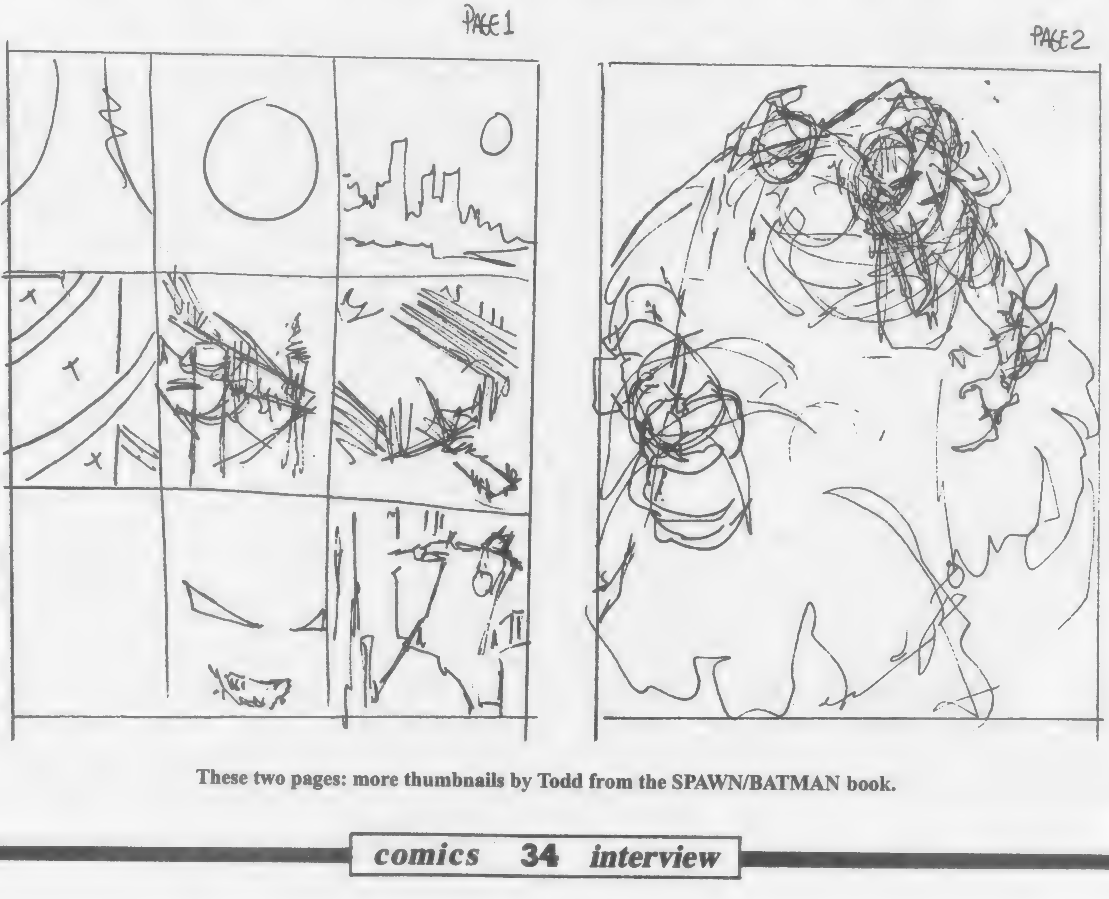
where he gets her back or at least tells her he's alive. But, there's nothing in the cards right now. He has to figure it all out as much as you do. What can he do to solve this and not injure anybody?

MARK: *Realistically, how long do you foresee doing SPAWN?*

TODD: That's a tough question. A lot of people have asked me that. I'd like to do SPAWN for 100 issues, really. The realistic part of me says, though, that with all of the things that I've got going on in the back room, my attention might get diverted more and more, and at some point I might have to make a decision on where I'm going to put the majority of my energies. One of the things I wanted to accomplish when I quit was that I wanted to see if somebody could create the next Mickey Mouse or the next Superman. The only way you can do that is to get out, not only to the masses but to the world. I've got plans going on now that will get it out to the world. At that point, you have to manage that character out across the world. I'd like to say that I'll be good enough that I'll have a management team behind me making sure that everything's taken care of so I can concentrate solely on the comic book, but I don't know if that's going to be true. I've always been a kind of control freak, and I always like or need to do everything myself. So, I'll keep going as long as it doesn't interfere with anything else and I'm having a good time drawing. I've got other ideas too that I'd like to draw. But, those other ideas aren't superhero ideas. They're kiddie/toon stuff. If I'm going to do superheroes, I'll be doing Spawn. Spawn's my man.

MARK: *So, Spawn's this character you're talking about as the next Mickey Mouse or Superman?*

TODD: Mickey Mouse. I'd compare him more to Mickey Mouse, not in terms of cuteness or accessibility, but in terms of management: Marvel and DC, when I was working for them, they just licensed out those characters, as long as the logo was right it didn't really matter what they manufactured. So, you'll get these bad versions of Batman, drawings on lunch pail boxes, or a bad version of a Spider-Man Gumby doll. The only thing that would let you know it was Spider-Man or Superman was that there was an "S" on his chest or that the cape was red. **Walt Disney** does things like, if you want to license Mickey Mouse, when you come back with that product it better look like fucking Mickey Mouse. They don't sit there and go, "Aw, as long as it's a kind of like a rat with big ears, that's close enough." That's what we've been doing on the superhero end. "That's close enough. The costume's right." I say to all the people I'm talking to that whatever design is on the shirt better look like the comic book, and whatever's on the shirt better also look like the video game. And, the video game better look like the comic book that looks like the shirt. And, the shirt better look like the toys that look like the video game that look like . . . etc. So, every time they pick up something that's Spawn, it looks the same. There's reinforcement of the look of the character and not so much the logo. Otherwise, at that point, the only thing I'm selling is the logo. The down side is that, being around 50 years, there's no definitive Batman look. There's no definitive Superman look. But, like I tell everyone I deal with, there's only been one guy that's been drawing Spawn. Take a look at the book. The only look is mine. When you go do something or even contemplate doing something, it better look like this book — it's the look. It's not like 400 artists have interpreted Spawn. There's only been one, and **Greg Capullo** now. For the most part, there is a definitive Spawn look. That's where my Mickey Mouse



These two pages: more thumbnails by Todd from the SPAWN/BATMAN book.

"Technically, I market every day of my life."

mentality comes in.

MARK: *Should we look forward to Spawn cartoons, video games, movies, TV shows, etc.?*

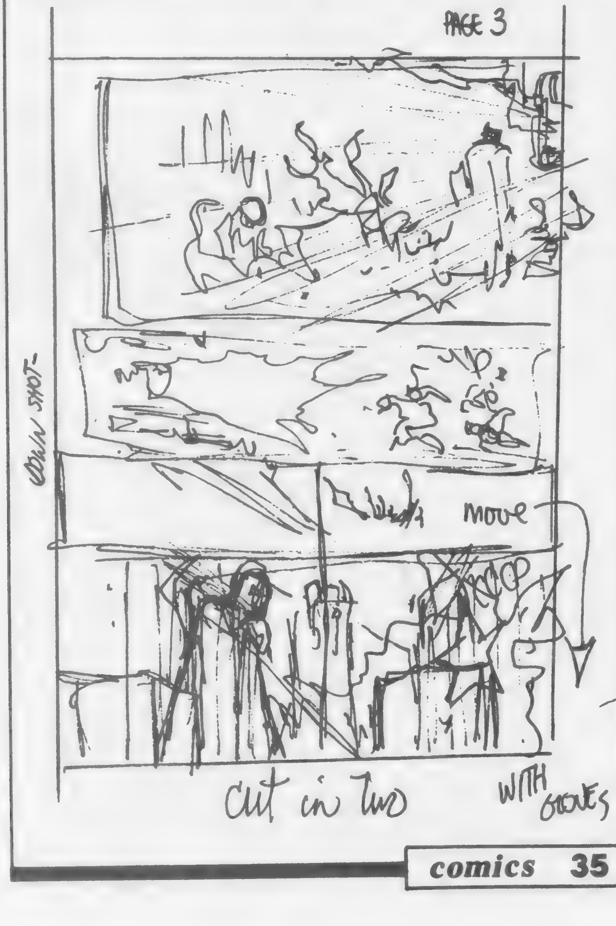
TODD: Yeah. I'd like to see them all. Again, as long as I can maintain control over some of them. Some of those deals are done. Now's not the time to tell you which ones. Part of marketing is keeping an interest in your character. Right now we're talking about SPAWN/BATMAN. Okay! Let's talk about **Frank Miller** and Batman and Spawn and cool books. Then, in two months, if there's a lull in the Spawn, "Oh, here's a piece of information I forgot to tell you." Now's the time to bring that out. Now is the time to bring up Frank's name. If I told you five months ago, "I got Frank! I got these five deals done," I've just blown my whole wad. I have nothing to tell you for the next year. But, if I only put out that information every 2-3 months, then I've got something to tell you for the next year. And, if I have something to tell you for the next year, then hopefully that will keep interest in my character for the next year.

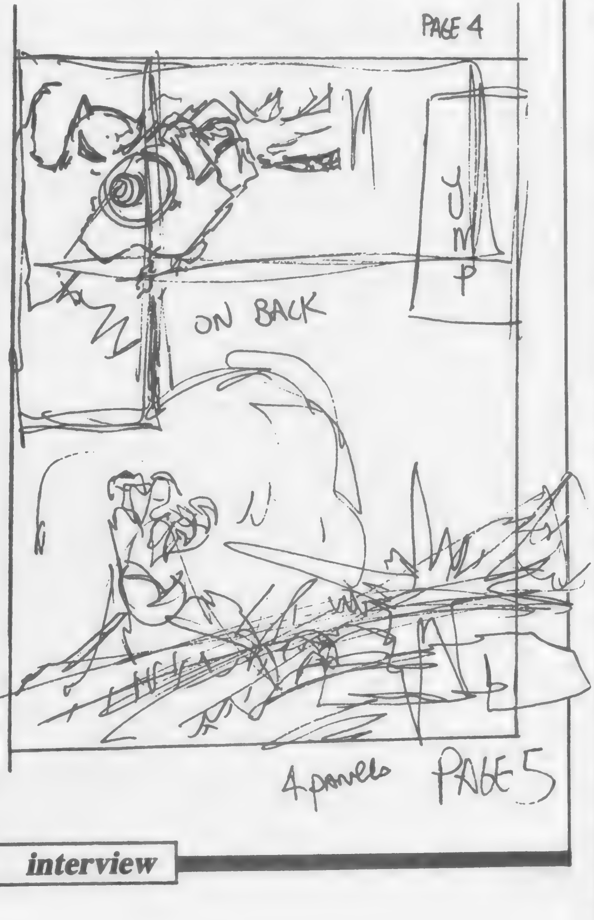
MARK: *So, why are you doing comic books and not marketing? It sounds like you'd be good at it.*

TODD: In a roundabout way, I guess I am doing marketing. I'm out there with 600 other products, so to speak. Image Comics works in such a way that Image doesn't promote SPAWN, I do. I'm a co-owner of Image. Image just takes in the number of how many books are ordered. But, each of us promotes our books differently. If anything, I've been a frustration to the retailers. Why do books from Extreme do this and why do books from **Jim Lee** do this? Why does Todd do that? There's no consistency to the line. That's because we're each allowed to push and market and do what we want with our own books. When I go to shows, I have this funny car, the Spawnmobile. People ask why I have a funny car. Nobody else does. Because I can. In terms of marketing, if everybody had a funny car, I'd put my logo on the side of an elephant because nobody would have an elephant. I have my logo on a 16 foot car that has two different paint jobs on it. They have to look at the car twice as long, hence they're looking at the logo twice as long. We just made a Hot Wheels of that car, I can sell the little Hot Wheels. I have big signs. Even in terms of marketing — bringing on **Frank Miller** — that's a way to help market the book. A few months back, when everybody else was doing foil and all the graphic covers, I said fuck foil, I'm going to get **Alan Moore.** Technically, I market every day of my life. That's the only way I'm going to stay up in the sales, keep coming up with things that keep people interested, or more importantly keep people's habits in mind. So, if a kid is into video games, and I go, "We have a video game coming out," they might go, "Cool! I like video games. And, I like Spawn." So, they'll continue to buy SPAWN until the video game comes out. Once the video game comes out, they might go, "This sucks. Spawn sucks," and quit. But, I think if you can always have something for them to be looking forward to, it only reinforces their buying habit. If nothing else, it seems to be working anyway. SPAWN's always been in the top ten since it debuted. Over the last six months, it's either been #1 or #2. It seems to be working. No tricks. $1.95. Just give them a good product.

MARK: *Do you think people are buying SPAWN or buying Todd McFarlane? Do you think if you did, say, TRANSFORMERS, that they'd buy it just because it's Todd McFarlane?*

TODD: Yeah, I think so. One of the goals I had when I left . . . I had a handful of them: crack the establishment, go show



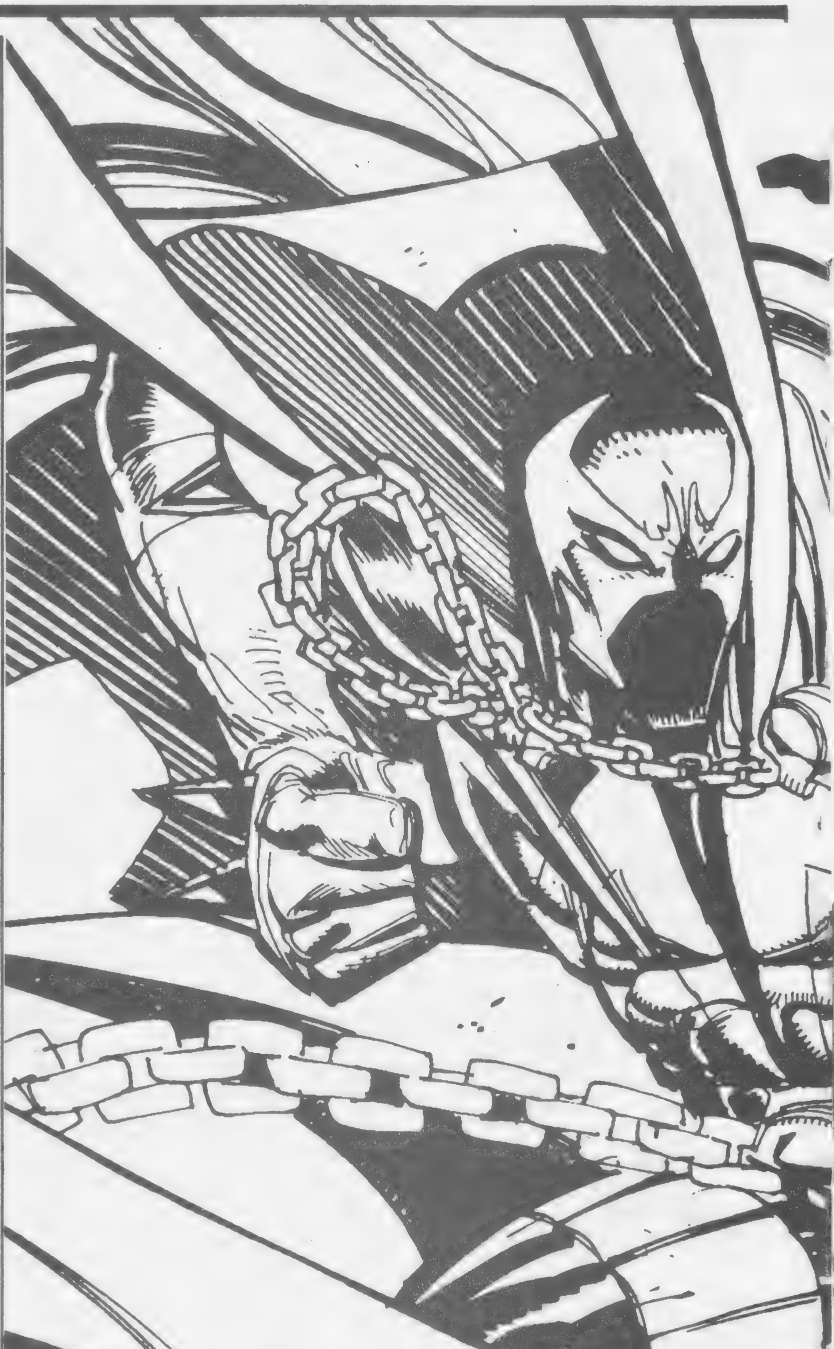


“Those who didn’t like SPAWN dumped it after #4. I have a

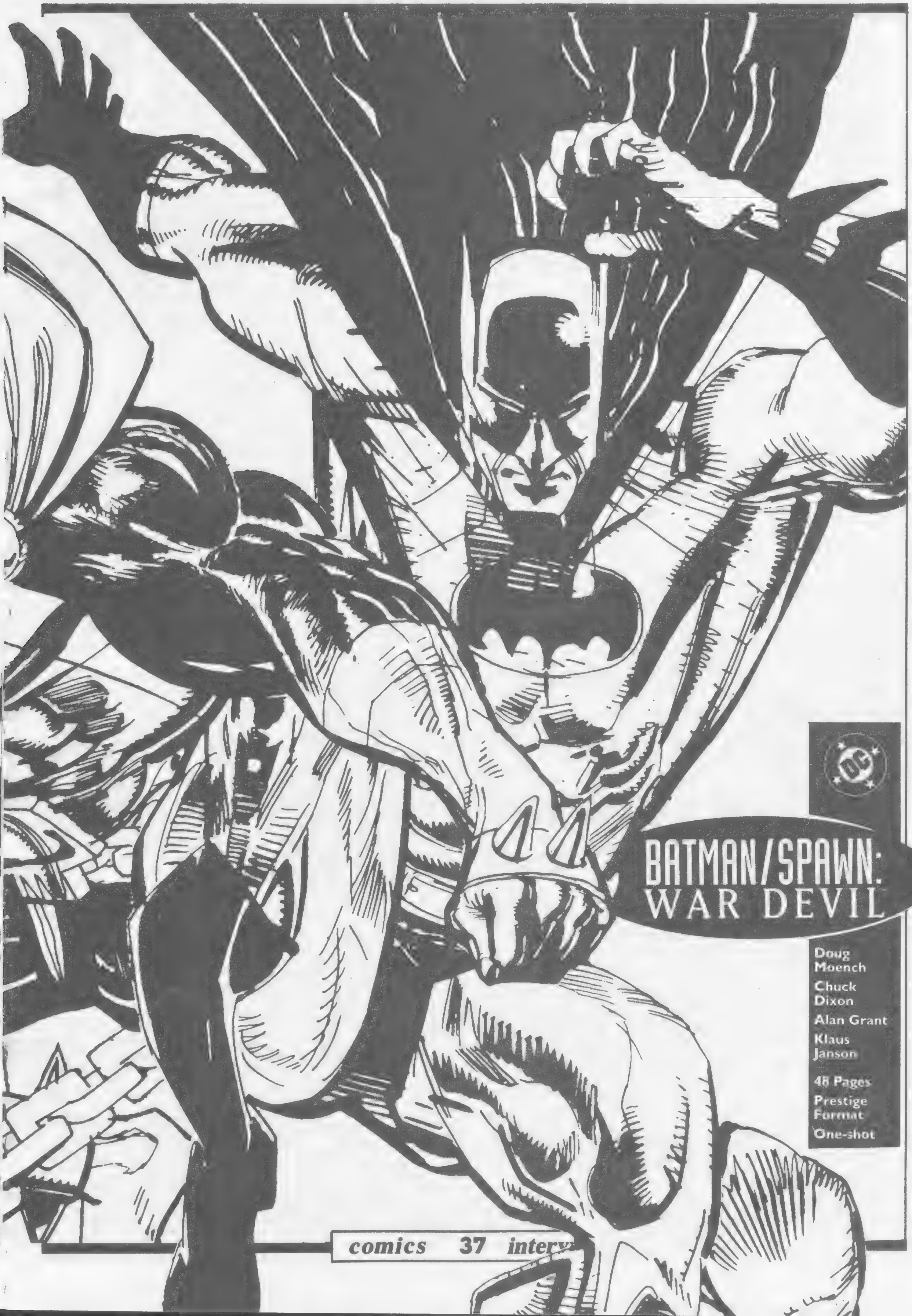
that the Cinderella stories exist. One of the other things that I wanted to do in connection with trying to get the product out to the world is to get them to care about that product. So, you don’t go out selling **Bob Kane.** You go out there selling Batman. You don’t go selling **Peter Laird.** You go out and sell the Teenage Mutant Turtles. There are a lot of 8-year-old kids who don’t know who **Peter Laird** is, or **Kevin Eastman.** But, they know who the Turtles are. My goal is to get it out to the point where **Todd McFarlane** becomes irrelevant, eventually, to the whole process. **Todd McFarlane** was necessary in the beginning to get the attention and to get the sales. But, issues #16, 17 and 18 I had nothing to do with besides owning the copyright of the character. Issue #16 came in second in the country in terms of volume sales. Issue #17 came in first for total sales in the country. And, issue #18 came in second, but just by a little. So, those books were either #1 or #2 for three consecutive months when I wasn’t even on the book! At that point, that is encouraging. At one point, I’ve made myself redundant, and yet a lot of people are still looking for me to come back on the book. On the other hand, they care enough about the Spawn character that they’re still buying that book. They’re not going, “Aw, Todd’s not writing or drawing it — I quit.” They’re going, “I like Spawn. He’s cool.” If I had done this on issues #4, 5, and 6, it might not have worked. But, again, I’m doing this on issues #16, 17, and 18, so they have a year and a half of books already. They’ve made a decision. As you know as a collector, once you get up to issue #15, you’ve either (a) made a decision that it sucks and you’re never going to buy it, or (b) you’re in for the long haul, so to speak. As a matter of fact, it doesn’t even take 15 issues. The people who didn’t like SPAWN dumped it after issue #4. I’ve got a faithful following right now. Now it’s a matter of taking that core and using that core to then jump to the next level, which is mass media.

MARK: *Do you see the comics artist or creator as almost a “rock god”? He’s mobbed everywhere he goes. You go to conventions and can’t walk around. You’re stuck behind a table for 6-7 hours.*

TODD: From the outside looking in, I still don’t get it. There’s a mania there. The mania started on AMAZING SPIDER-MAN. Then, when I went to the new SPIDER-MAN, when Marvel promoted it and did those multiple books, it



faithful following. Now it's a matter of jumping to the next level.”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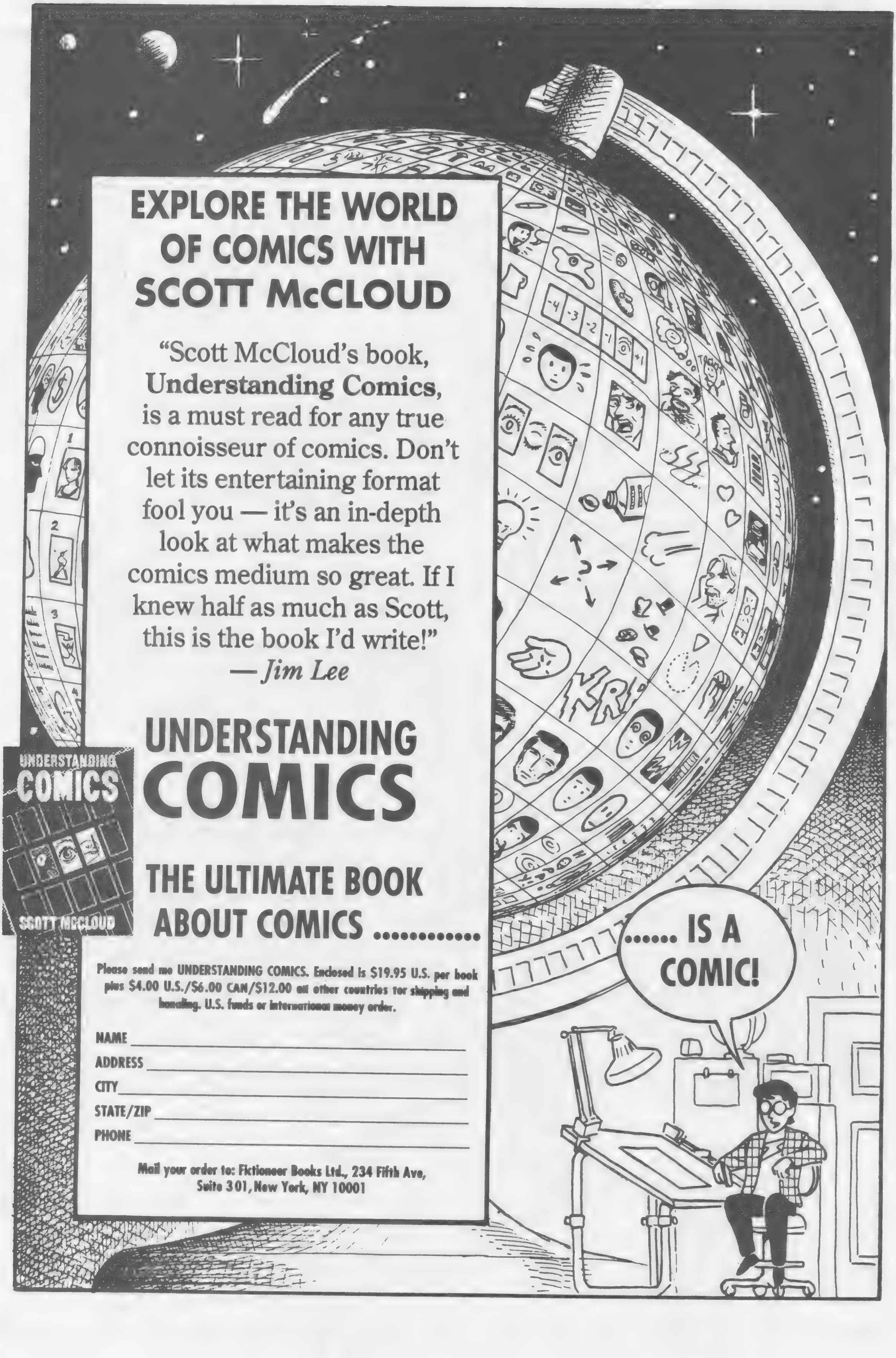

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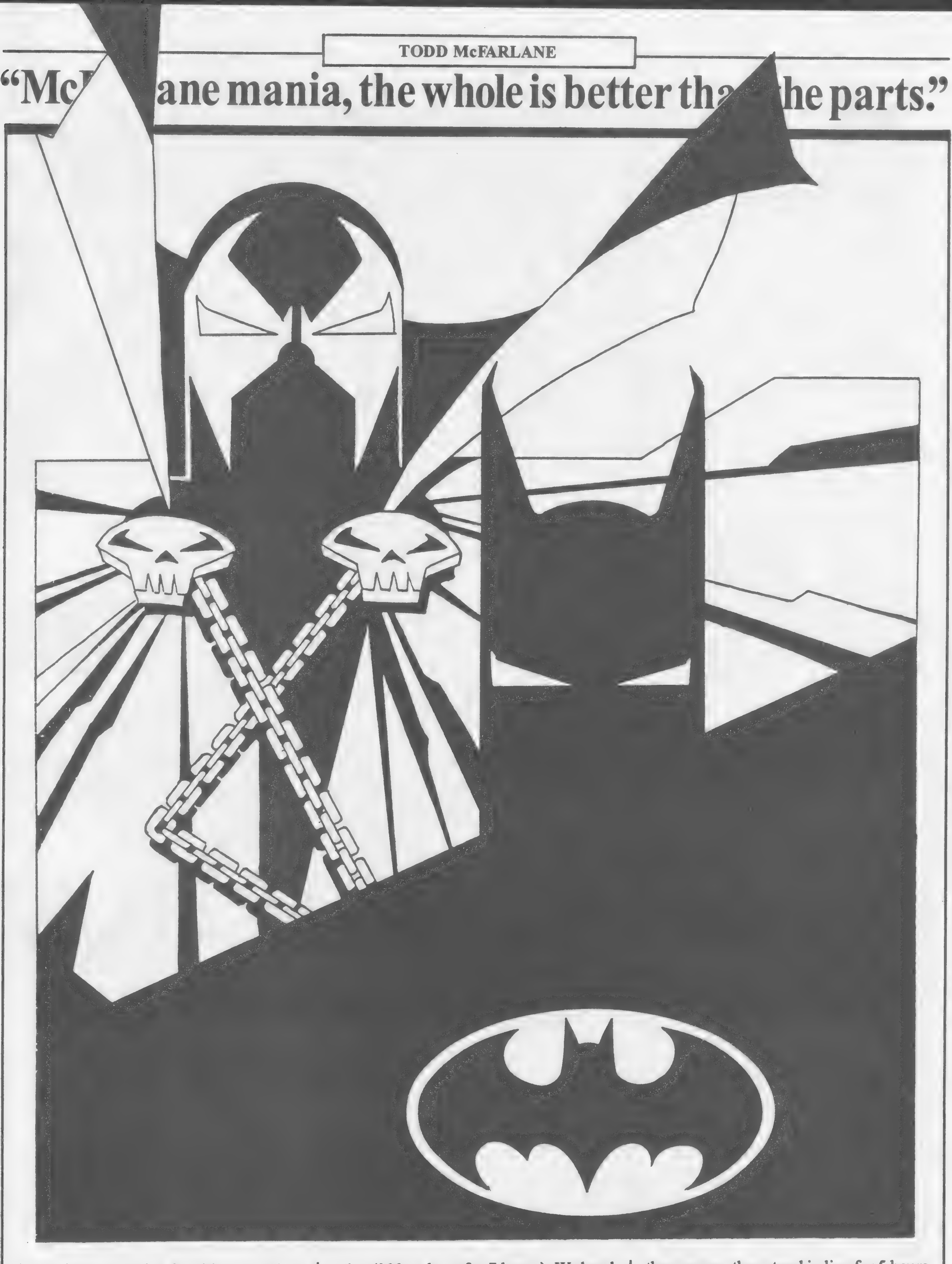
“Mc ane mania, the whole is better tha he parts.”



jumped up to another level because they were able to pull in the public at that point. They sent some stuff out to the L.A. TIMES, the NEW YORK TIMES, etc. It just doesn't seem to go away. SPAWN is a big seller consistently. It's a weird thing. The down side of it is that I limit people to one autograph per person when I go to shows, because I can do 2,100 signatures a day (300 an hour for 7 hours). We hand out 2,100 tickets and I sign 2,100 books. But, you don't get to talk to the fans anymore, which is why you try to take time out to have a panel or something so you can say something more than just thank you. On the other hand, some kids get a thrill out of standing in line. There's something weird and magical to them that they can say they stood in line for 5 hours and they finally got the autograph. It becomes an event to them. In terms of why me, I don't know. I can give you a list of 20 guys who I think should be mobbed. But, I think right now **Todd McFarlane** mania, the whole is better than the parts. They're not coming because **Todd McFarlane** is a good penciller anymore.

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"We created free agency. We created a better environment."

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MARK: *That's one thing Image Comics helped do, they helped to make comics an event again. What other things do you think Image has accomplished?*

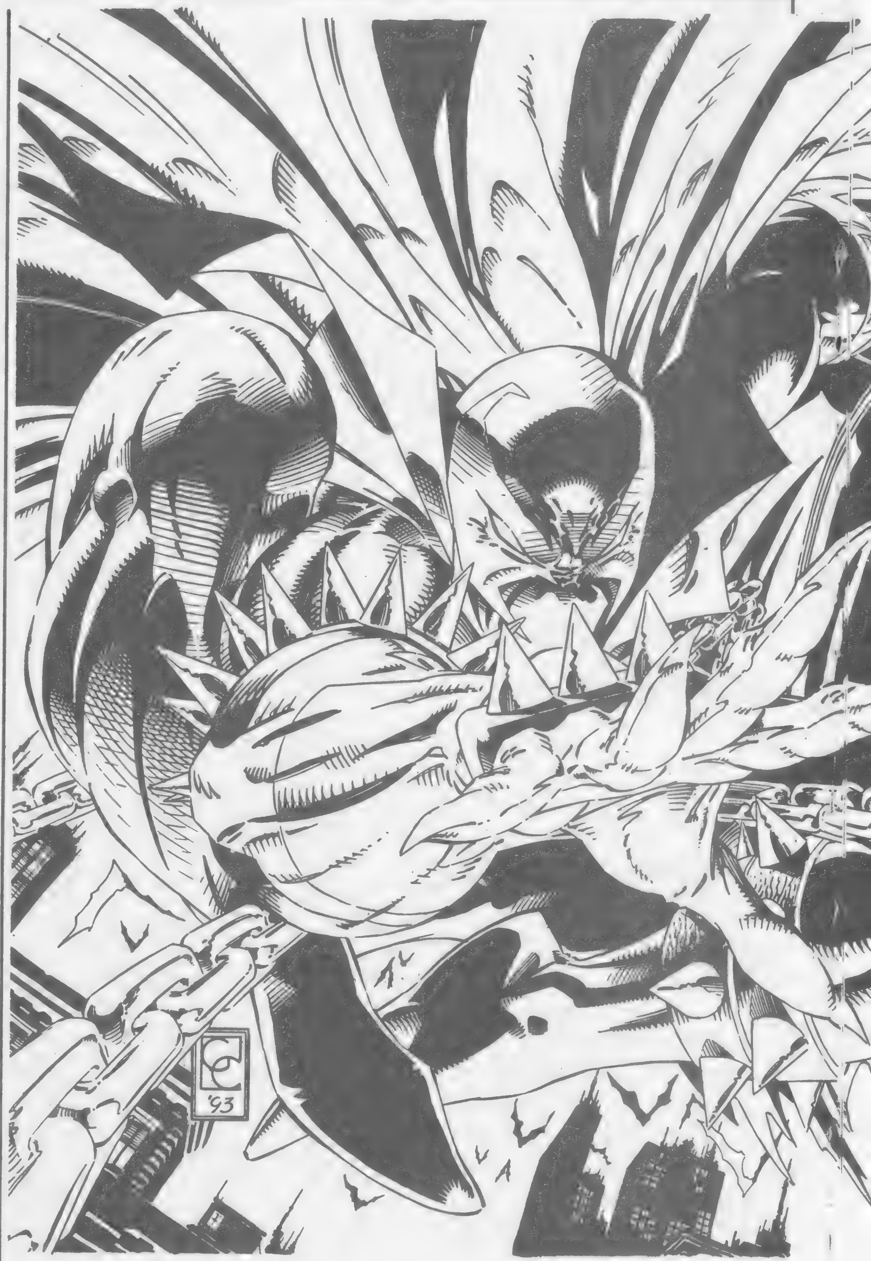
TODD: What have we done? We've created free agency. We've created a better work environment. That's 100% true. There are a lot of guys out there who think we suck and that we're their enemies. But, I can probably give you a list of 200-400 guys right now who are getting a better deal, at least financially, than they would have gotten had we never existed. We cracked the door open. Suddenly, Valiant had to up the stakes, and DC had to up the stakes. Marvel just gave a raise to everybody. Malibu's doing a good job treating creators fair. Dark Horse, too. There're spin-off companies now: Defiant and the Legends imprint and stuff. All of a sudden, where there used to be only two opportunities, Marvel and DC, if you weren't working for them you were working at some real backwater place. We've kicked open the door. When we kicked open the door, we never said you had to follow us now that we're out and we're free. You don't have to follow our path. But, we're saying that now we've helped to give you a choice of paths to pick. Whether you like us or not is irrelevant. Whether you like our books or think we can write or not, who cares? You're going to have to accept that Image Comics opened up the waters and created free agency. There are people who have prospered, even those that didn't leave. The major companies had to up their ante to keep the people, the people who didn't leave or never wanted to leave, that are now getting a better deal in terms of creativity and in terms of finances. To me, that's what I'm most proud of, that there are a lot of people doing a hell of a lot better today. If they want to argue that point, come in my direction and we'll argue it.

MARK: *What do you foresee for the next 5-10 years in the industry?*

TODD: The first thing I see is a bit of leveling off. The one concept that I think people are missing — even six months ago the retailers and the buyers to a certain extent were missing — is that just because you create free agency and just because you come up with 20 new companies doesn't mean that 20 new companies will be good. I see this no different from any other entertainment or sports. There are 20 baseball teams out there. If you expand to 60 teams, that doesn't mean that they'll all be great baseball teams. You'll have a bunch of sucky ones. It's going to water down the product. Just because you go, "I'm going to create 50 new books, like Marvel," doesn't mean you can find 50 good creators. If anything, if you take a good look at their product, you'll see *they* didn't. You'll have to go after a lot of young kids that weren't quite ready or are still diamonds in the rough. I hope a couple of those kids turn out to be the next big shots in the business. The product then becomes watered down because you don't have "established professional" people ready to jump on these books anymore so you start putting out product for the sake of product. I think there's a finite amount of talent out there. You can't just keep expanding and not expect the quality of all the products to go down a certain level. The one thing that will help us at Image and SPAWN is that I put

TODD McFARLANE'S
SPAWN
SPOGZ
SIX SPAWN PRIZMSPOGZ RANDOMLY INSERTED
6 HIGH GL… …OGZ IN EVERY …CK

“I get more of a thrill that Greg and Grant’s SPAWN

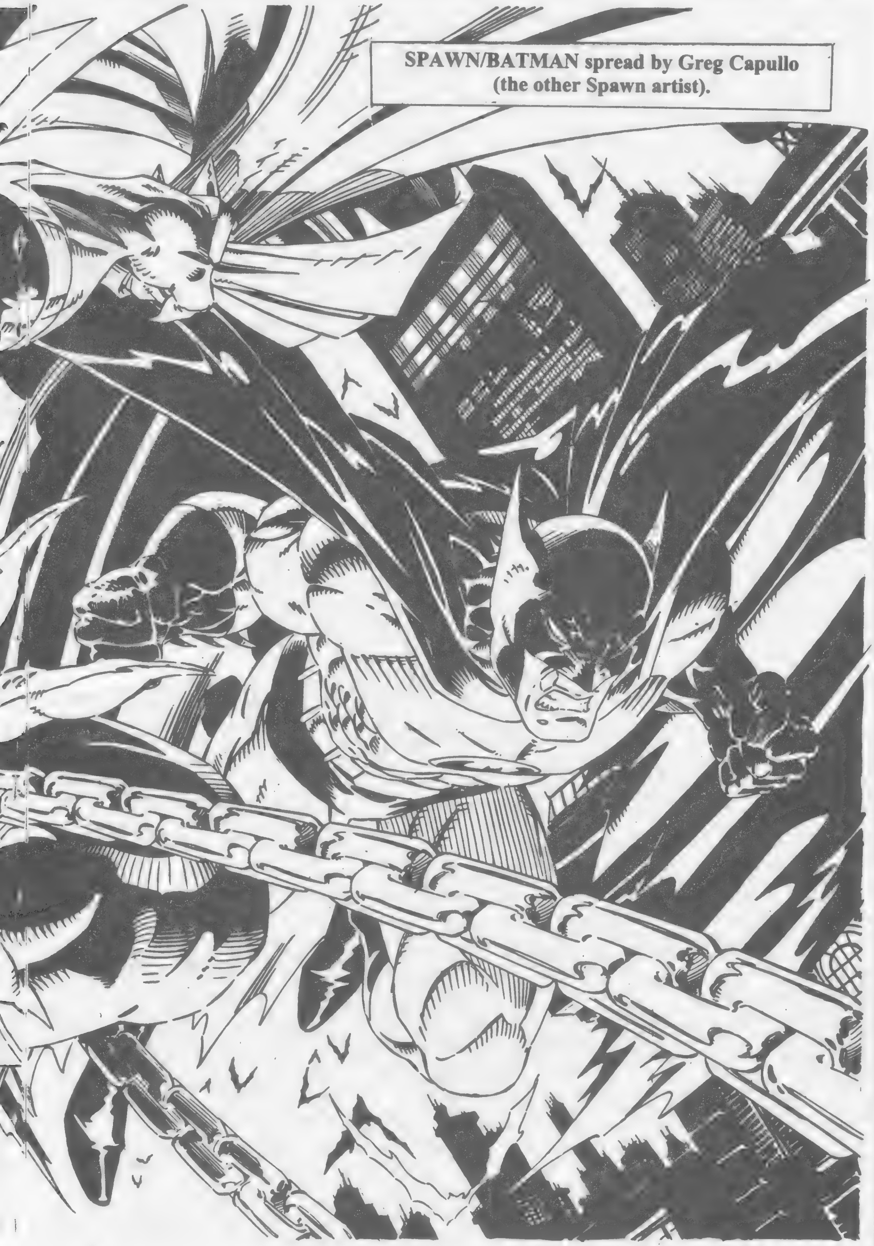


top-flight letterers and colorists on there (**Steve Oliff** and **Tom Orzechowski**), and I use top-flight paper. I pencil and ink as good as I can do. But, all that stuff . . . a lot of books can’t compete with that. A lot of books can’t get that kind of paper and can’t get that kind of coloring or lettering. Maybe I draw a little bit better than some people, so I can put a package together that may look a little bit better and, as you water down the whole line, the ones that are decent go from being decent to pretty damn good. When I took over AMAZING SPIDER-MAN I was following six fill-in issues in a row. I was on it for a few months and people started paying attention. I think they started paying attention because I did three issues in a row more than anything else. But, I’ve often said that if I’d followed **John Byrne** or **George Perez** or **Art Adams** on AMAZING SPIDER-MAN and they’d done 20 issues in a row, I would probably have been a dead man. Nobody would have cared about me. If anything, they would have said, “You suck.” Luckily, I was coming at a time when the Spider-Man books were on a downswing. If they want to start putting out more books in the next few years, and everyone comes up with their own universes and companies, they’re just going to make my book look better. That’s a plus side for me on that.

MARK: *Where do you see yourself in five years?*

TODD: I don’t know. I’m asking that same question. I see one of two things because I’m an extremist. In five years, I can see me still hunched over the board doing a monthly comic and screwing all the rest (Hollywood, toy deals, T-shirt deals, animation). Or, I’ll have jumped full-steam into that stuff and be running the Spawn Empire, so to speak. I’m one or the other; I’m not good at being somewhere in-between. The challenge of Hollywood for me is that it’s virgin territory. One of the reasons I act and say and do a lot of the stuff I do in comic books is because (I hate to say it) sometimes I get bored. What can I do? I’m going to put out BATMAN/SPAWN. Cool. I have to get some kind of creative juices out of that. I will because Frank’s a cool guy and I’ll be drawing it. However, in terms of, if you put out this book and you’ll be number one, well I’ve been #1 plenty of times in terms of sales. You’ll be #1 in the hot artist list. Well, I’ve done that for 20 consecutive months. You’ll get a mania if you go to the conventions. I get that. You’ll get a big paycheck. I get that. You know what I mean? There’s a lot of things I’ve accomplished. It can get kind of boring, so to speak, at the top. I hope that doesn’t sound egotistical. I get more of a thrill that **Greg Capullo** and **Grant Morrison’s** SPAWN #17 came in #1. That’s cool because I never would have expected that. I get my thrills in weird ways now. In terms of trying to keep myself enthused in comic books becomes tougher and tougher every day. That’s why I come up with these crazy stunts or say stupid stuff, if nothing else to get people crazy about me so I have something to talk about. But, in Hollywood, it’s a whole new game. It’s Marvel Comics all over again. They think they know what they’re doing. They think they have all the answers. If you try to do anything a little bit different you’re going to get kicked and slapped around. I’ve fought against the changes on SPIDER-MAN and I’ve fought against being able to be a writer on the book, and I fought against leaving the company. To tell you the truth, if I wanted to, I could do the exact same thing in Hollywood, try to unionize the frigging place and go crazy on it. Again, because I’ve found creative

#17 came in #1. I never would have expected that."



SPAWN/BATMAN spread by Greg Capullo (the other Spawn artist).

people are kind of weird since leaving Marvel and trying to unionize, all I can do is go into uncharted territories. You may think I'm crazy and I'm going on a suicide trip and you think I shouldn't be doing this . . . fuck you. I'm going to do it my way. Even if it doesn't work, it wasn't supposed to work. That's the greatest thing about taking a suicide trip, which I'm always so amazed that people are so afraid to take. If you take the suicide trip and you die, you were supposed to! Nobody gave you any chances of living. If you pull it off, in the one in a million chance you pull it off, you'll look like a genius and they'll trumpet you for the next ten years because you pulled it off against the odds. That's always been the path that I love to take. Could I have sold this SPAWN movie to the big studios and had the big directors and stars? Yeah. I had that offer a couple of times. But, all they want are the Spawn rights and then they want to spit me out in the streets. I've told them, fuck yourselves. There are some big studios that aren't quite too happy with me, but . . . no. Would it be a better movie? Yeah. Would it gross a lot of money? Would a lot of people see it? Yeah. But, I also have to come to grips with something like my dad coming up to me one day and saying, "Todd, I just saw that SPAWN movie. That was cool. What did you do?" "Cashed the paycheck." "And what else?" "Nothing." I'm not going to have that. If you don't like that movie, I can't say I'm going to pass the buck ("I had nothing to do with it"). If you loved it, I can't take any other praise than I owned the copyright on it. No, no, I want to be involved in the movie so that I can say I had something to do with the movie. If you dislike it, you'd better talk to me. It's my problem. If you like it, then you have to talk to me again because I had something to do with it. I won't allow my "baby" . . . I keep telling them that this is my child. How dare they try to adopt my child and not give me visitation rights? Screw you. I'd rather make no movie than do that. They're in the movie business. they have to make movies. I don't have to. I make a good living as it is without movies. I'll get the other deal, guaranteed.

MARK: *Movie-making is a lot more of a collaborative process as opposed to comics where you can do it all yourself. Are you willing to accede that type of control?*

TODD: At the beginning, yes. I've always been able to accede any kind of control that I don't think I can do a better job on. When I get in a plane, I don't want to pilot it. If I took pilot lessons and I studied piloting and I thought I could fly the plane, I'd go and pilot the thing myself or at least go buy my own plane and pilot on the weekend. So, have I ever directed a movie? Nope. Have I ever written a screenplay? Nope. Have I ever done this or that? Nope. But, can I help on the visual end of it? Technically, I direct in my mind. So, can I maybe sit there and give some suggestions? The point isn't that they even listen to me, the point is that they just acknowledge my existence in the first place. It's a weird thing, but that's all I'm looking for.

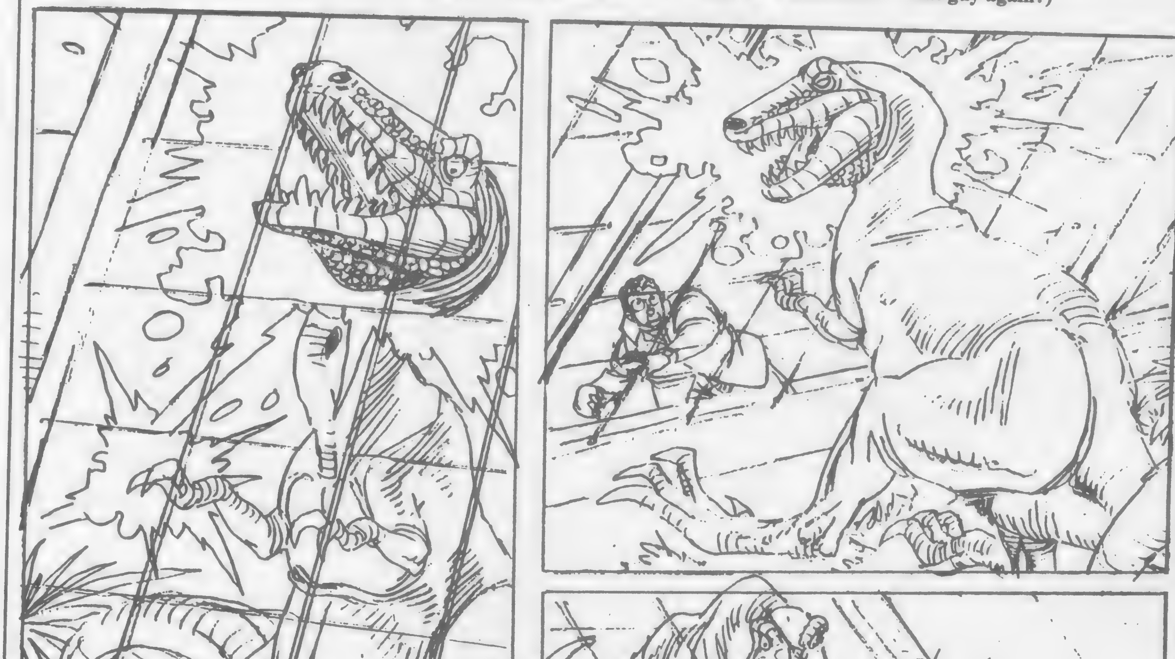
MARK: *So you want to be heard. You want to have your opinion acknowledged.*

TODD: That's it! Acknowledged to the point that they go, "That's stupid." Okay. But, at least they took ten seconds to say, "Todd, you're here on the set. What do you think about this?" That's enough for me. It's not that I actually want them to do what I say, I just want them to acknowledge that the guy who created what it is they're working, they have the respect to turn to me and ask what I think

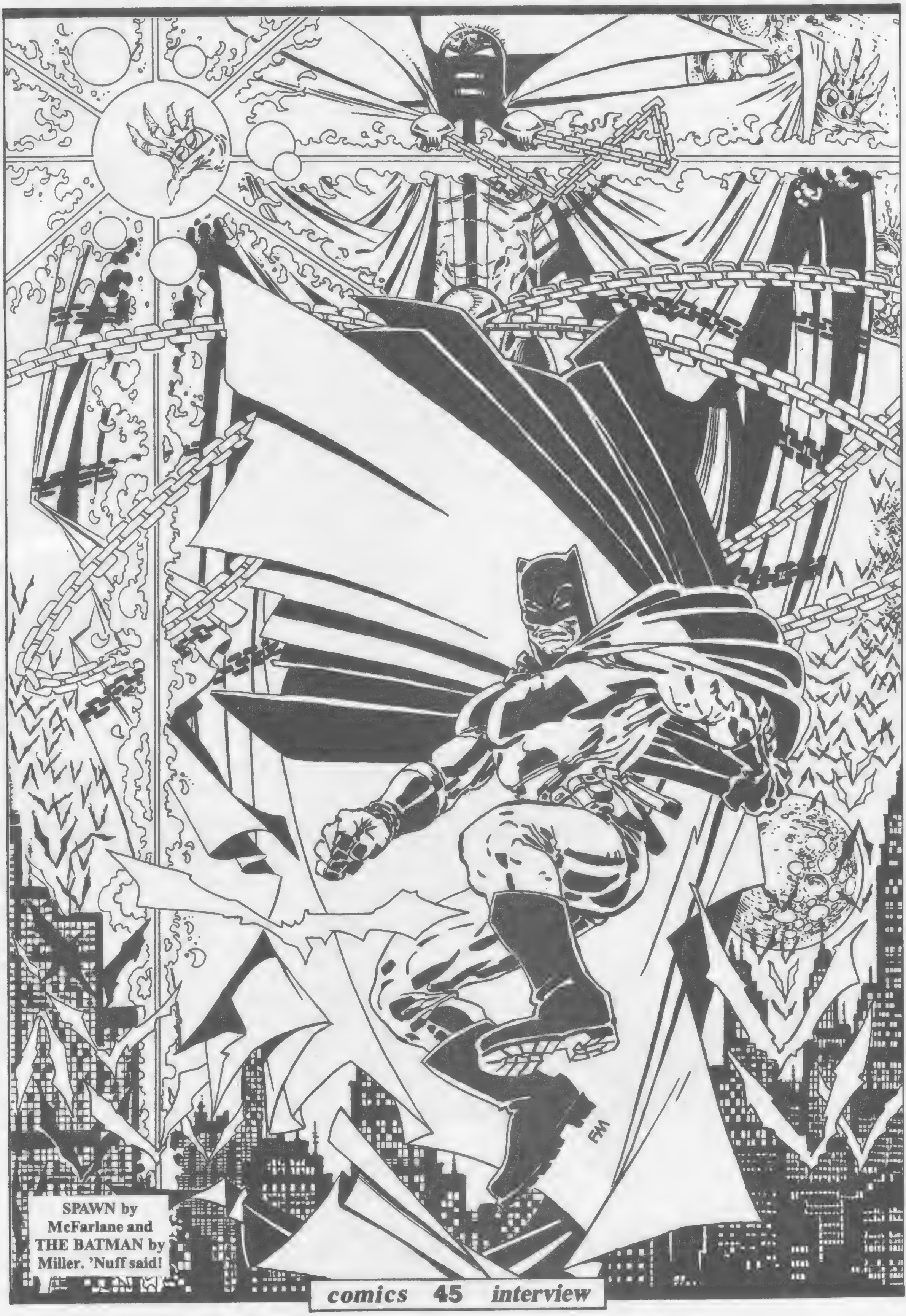
"Spielberg wanted the biggest movie in history. Nobody

on this. On the making of JURASSIC PARK, the guy who wrote that book, **Michael Crichton** sold the rights and got himself a nice chunk of change. They gave it to Universal and **Spielberg** makes a movie. **Spielberg** wanted to keep these dinosaurs as secretive as possible. He did a good job, because some of the people that I know were working on JURASSIC, and I was surprised at how many people in Hollywood knew nothing about JURASSIC. Six months before that movie came out, I knew that **Spielberg** wanted to make this the biggest movie in history, and nobody really knew what JURASSIC PARK was until you started seeing the trailers. Because of that secretiveness, the guy who wrote the book wasn't allowed on the set, and they wouldn't allow him on the set. Now, I think there's a certain level of secrecy, but to me that's crazy. That makes me mad. That's the story I always use when I'm in Hollywood. I get fucking angry when I tell that story. They see the redness in my face. How dare anybody! I created the Spawn. I wrote the Spawn. And, somebody's going to buy that thing from me and is going to create a movie that's going to make $600 million. The studio is going to make money and everybody famous off this thing. Everybody's talking about it. But, the guy who planted the seed — the guy who wrote the book — wasn't allowed on the fucking set. He didn't want to direct it. He just wanted to see the dinosaurs. And, they wouldn't even allow him the courtesy of being on the set. Fuck Hollywood then at that point. I can make that deal in ten seconds. But, I won't make that deal. If somebody else wants to at Image or some other company, God bless them. The important thing to me is that at least the guy who controls that character gets to make the decision. **Dave Sim** says, "I don't want to sell nothing. I don't want to make any licensing stuff." Good for **Dave Sim.** He gets to make the decision. Somebody else says, "I'm going to sell my soul. I'm going to take my character down and sell it to Showtime." Fine. You do it. Take it in the shorts. But, at least the creative person got to make the decision. My decision is that I will not allow myself to be locked out of this process. I don't need this. I don't need

From Michael Chrichton . . . to Universal & Spielberg . . . on to comics! Rare pencils from the "zero" issue of Topps Comics' JURASSIC PARK by Gil "Sugar" Kane. (Story adaptation by Walt Simonson — that guy again?)



knew what JURASSIC PARK was until the trailers."



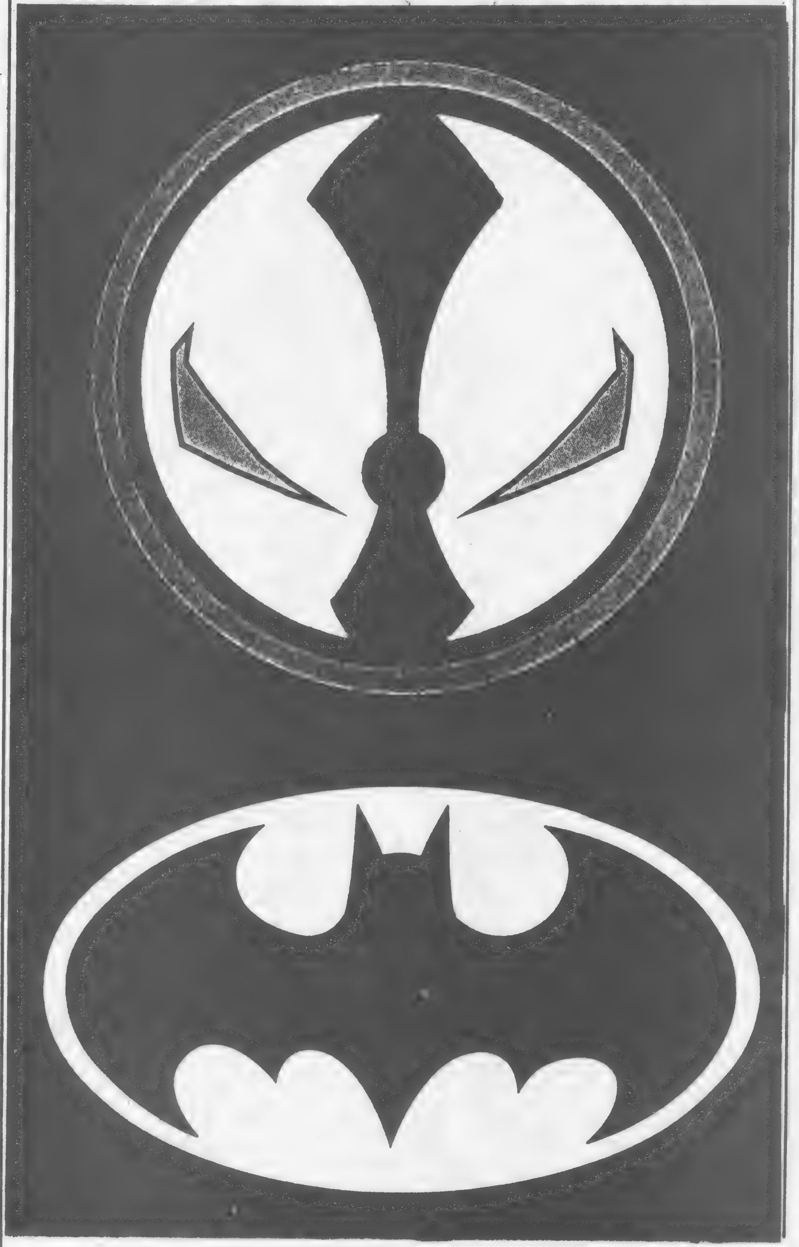
SPAWN by McFarlane and THE BATMAN by Miller. 'Nuff said!

"I have fun with those who hate me, because I don't care."

Hollywood that badly. I'm making a good life as it is. I'm happy with my life as it is. If I can't get what I need out of Hollywood, then I'm not going to get Hollywood.

MARK: *How would you like to be remembered, then?*

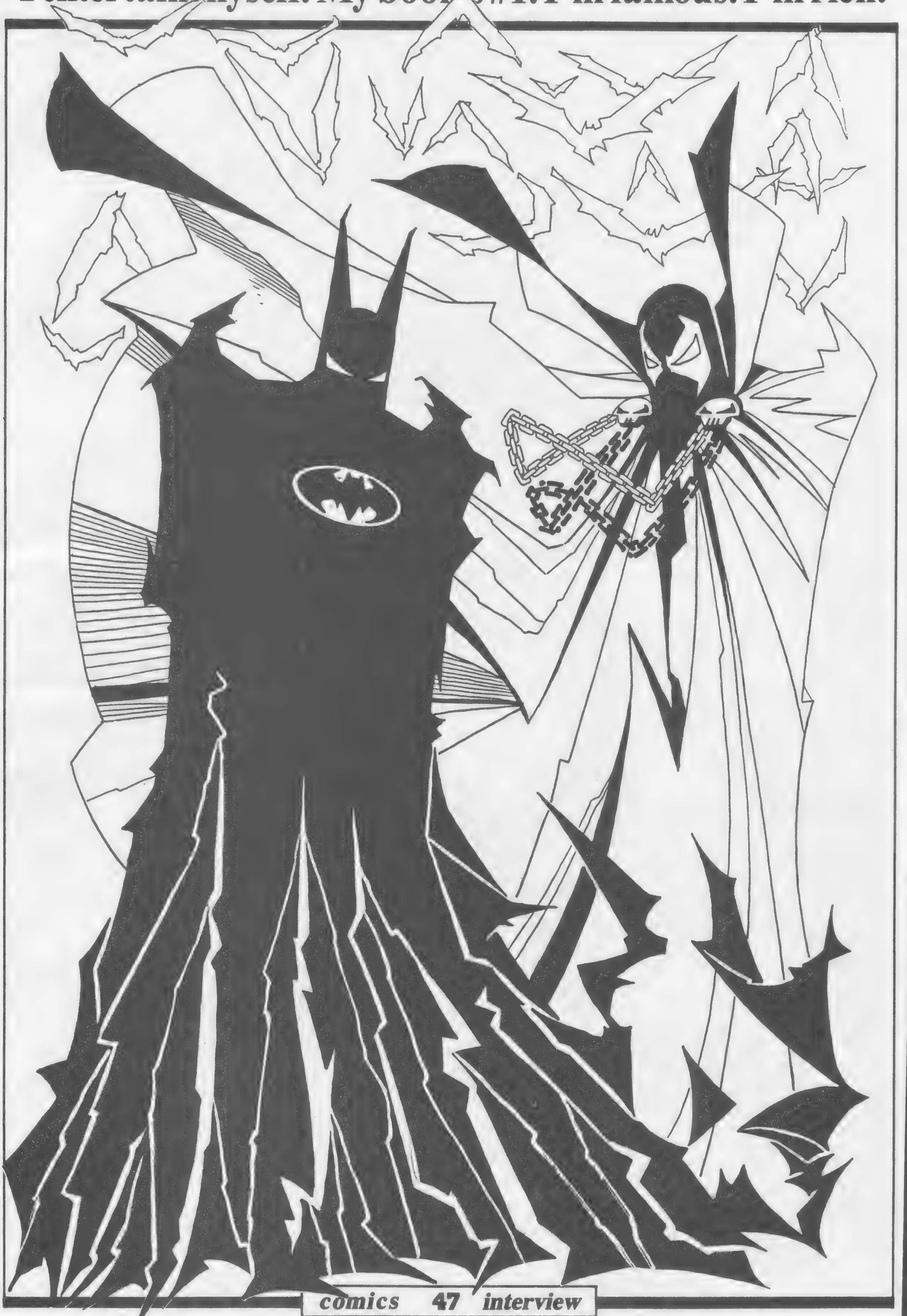
TODD: As a guy who made some modifications to Spider-Man that had some lasting impact. They're still doing the big eyes and spaghetti webbing. I created a potential new character like Spawn. I was able to show the Cinderella story there, that you can create something that will get out to the masses. And, more importantly, as a guy who fights for his convictions, whether it was the popular vote or not. I get crazy when the answer to the question is, "Because that's the way it is." That's not an answer to me. So, I fight for that. If I was born 40 years earlier, I'd be fighting for the rights of blacks or for the freedom of women to vote 50 years before that. Just because women hadn't voted doesn't mean that they weren't entitled to vote. That would have been my argument in 1910. Just because the blacks have always sat in the back of the bus doesn't fucking make it right. Do you understand? That's the mentality I've got from comic books. I'm overstating the problem. But, that mentality leads to these kinds of decisions in the world. Why is it that you don't treat your creative people this way? Their answer is because this is the way we've always treated them. That doesn't mean it makes it right. I've been telling you that you've been treating them wrong for 50 years. Screw you. If I can do anything to buck the system, and I can do anything to persuade people . . . in a small way, they've had to up their ante and had to pay these guys they've been paying shit wages to another $5 a page so that they can put food on the table. I guarantee that the CEO's at Marvel and DC Comics are eating steak every night. They're not worried about where the next paycheck is coming from. So, if I'm a bane to the existence of others, then hallelujah. Do I care that people hate me in comic books? I could give a crap. If I have one guy who hates me that buys my comic book, then that's stupid. The people who hate me are executives, creative people, editors, jealous peers, whatever. But, if I told them all to go fuck themselves tomorrow (which I wouldn't because I like most of them), I'd lose maybe two sales. I don't really care that somebody who has a personal grudge against me is mad at me because it doesn't affect my life. Now, if a 12-year-old kid came up to me and said, "Todd, I don't think you should have said that," I'd go, "Oh, sorry about that." That's an important guy to me, that 12-year-old kid with his $2 in his hand. I could give a shit about the rest of them. If they like me, beauty! If they dislike me, beauty. That everybody likes me in the world doesn't change how much love my wife gives me. That they all dislike me doesn't change how much my little kid calls me Dad at the end of the day and gives me a big hug. To tell you the truth, I have more fun with those that hate me, because I don't care that they hate me. But, they're not used to being on the receiving end, so I can actually poke fun at more people and instigate them. That's how I have my fun. I bring it on myself. But, in a twisted way, that's the way I entertain myself. My book's selling #1. I'm famous. I'm rich. What can I do? I know! Let's see if I can get **John Byrne** pissed off today. I do stupid stuff. Am I immature? Yeah, I can be immature.



MARK: *Speaking of people you pissed off, you recently debated Peter David in Philadelphia.*

TODD: Let me tell you this. I didn't really make the point there (in Philadelphia). You know the title of the

“I entertain myself. My book’s #1. I’m famous. I’m rich.”



“Selling a lot of comics means people listen to you.

debate? I didn’t give a fuck what the title of the debate was. When we were trying to put this together, Peter said that there had to be a title to a debate. I couldn’t give a shit. You can call it, “Mom’s apple pie,” and I would have said, “Okay.” That was Peter’s title. Whatever Peter’s title was, I didn’t care. Essentially, I wasn’t even here to argue that point. My whole thing was that I wanted to go there. I couldn’t care what this was about. I was here to tell Peter blah blah blah. But, as it got further and further down the line, I could see that people on certain ends were taking this thing far too seriously. They actually wanted an “official” debate, to the point that once I got going at the debate I rolled over and realized, “You don’t want to have any fun.” My whole point of that debate was basically to tell people that no one’s laughing in this industry anymore. Nobody wants to have a joke. Nobody wants to smile. Everybody’s worried about the glut and diminishing returns. Everybody’s such a tight ass. But, again, nobody wanted to have any fun. So, if they wanted to have a serious debate, then fine. Let’s have a “serious” debate. Here’s a Rhodes scholar sitting talking to some moron, and he’s going to beat him to a pulp. If you guys get some kind of charge out of that, that’s perfect. But, it kind of worked, because a lot of my enemies were sitting in the stands, and they loved that I got the shit kicked out of me. And he killed me. I’ll go on record as saying Peter gutted me from ear to ear. The people sitting in the stands felt good about that. I did bring some joy that day, because the world was now put back into perspective to these people. “Good! Image Comics took a shellacking. **Todd McFarlane**, that schmo, took a shellacking. The world is brighter now.” These are the kind of people we’re dealing with, so . . . whatever. I thought we could have had a lot more fun with it. I had four costume changes, which they said they wouldn’t allow me to do, or some people had strong reservations about. I hope Peter takes it and does a continuation of that. However, the actual topic of whether Image gets a fair shake or not; I don’t think about that. I just worry about SPAWN and try to look out for Image. I can’t control the media in any way whatsoever. I can only control my destiny in getting the books to the kids.

MARK: *You have a column in WIZARD. Do you think your opinions influence the readers or the industry?*

TODD: I hope not. I think the kids don’t care about my opinions. The kids don’t read those columns. They don’t pay attention to any of that. They just care whether I turn out a SPAWN comic book when they come into the store. Do my opinions count to the people I aggravate? Yeah, they do. In that column I can say and do stuff that will aggravate people. They’ll write back and shoot back their little venomous letters. It’s the way I have my entertainment.

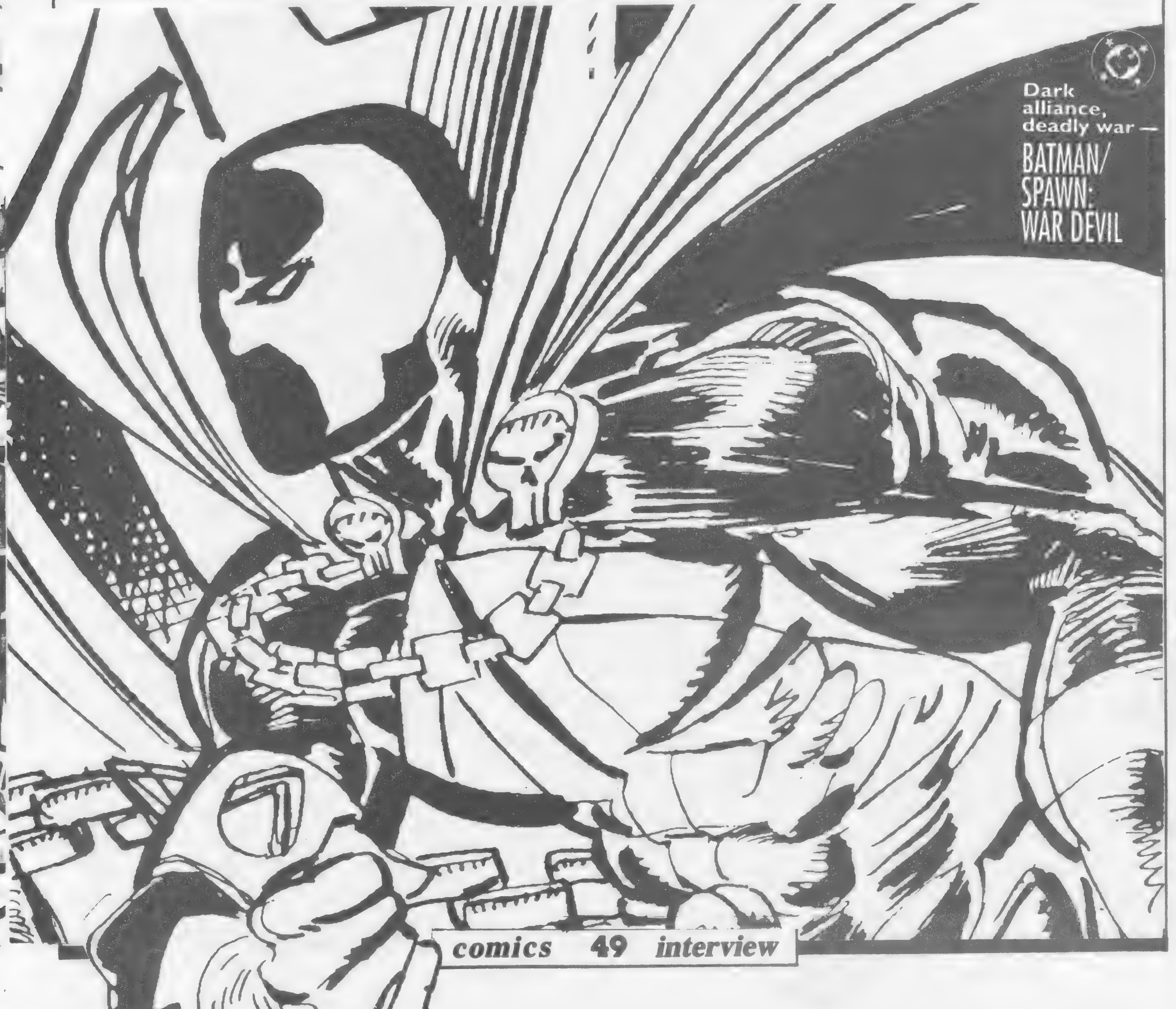
MARK: *You’ve added a sense of showmanship to comics that didn’t exist for the personalities/creators before. Would you want to see more of this?*

I guess I’ve helped people change this industry.”

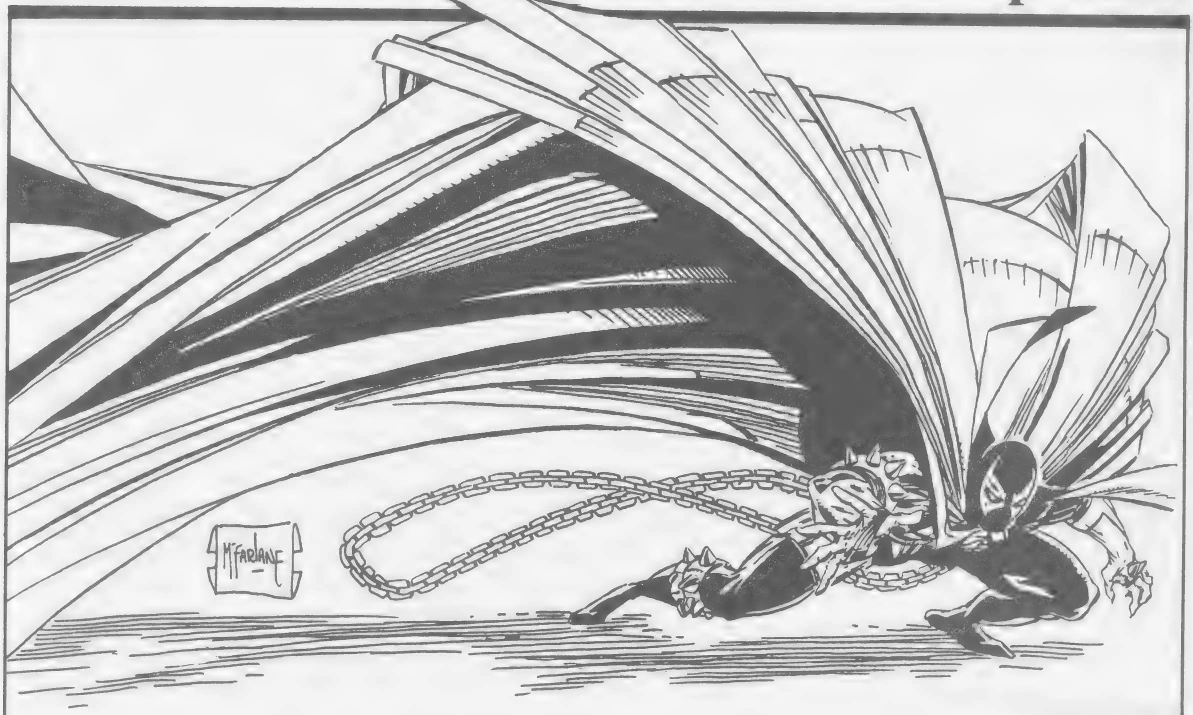
TODD: Oh, yeah. But, it becomes a personality trait. I’ve been a hambone since I was 5 years old. I was always the kid that had to give the right answer when they asked what 2+2 was. I was always the kid that bucked the system from grade 1 to grade 12 and through college. The funny thing is that people think you just turned into an asshole in the last two years since you happened to get a few extra bucks in your pocket. No. If anyone’s actually stopped and done their homework on **Todd McFarlane**, they’ll see that **Todd McFarlane** is the same out-of-control, spaz, immature little punk that he’s always been since Day One. That’s the thing that’s always amazed me. I’m doing nothing different today that I was doing even 5 years ago when I first broke into the business. But, the only difference is that nobody listened to me 5-6 years ago. I can tell you hours and hours about how I sat with other creative people and said, “The system’s wrong. I think they’re not treating us right. I think that somebody’s got to unionize and break away from this.” I’ve been saying the same thing for years. I guess it had just fallen on deaf ears. Selling a lot of comic books means people listen to you. Somehow, someway, I guess I’ve helped change this industry, broke some of the rules that exist because they exist, nobody knows why.

MARK: *Do you think that this creator’s “union” that the people behind Pro/Con are discussing is an answer?*

TODD: I don’t know that we could ever unionize. I would like to think so, but that’s a full-time job. I’m the kind of guy that, if that was my major goal in life, I would quit doing everything else and unionize this business or die trying. I think the business could be unionized. But, you get to the point where you deal with a lot of people who don’t want to have the freedom that I’m looking for. In other words, I have to come to grips with, “Todd, why should you push your influence on other people? If other people are content to work at Marvel, that’s fine. If other people are content to work on a creator-owned book but don’t want to publish their own books, that’s fine. If other people want to do kiddie comics or adult comics, that’s fine. If other people want to do this or that, that’s fine.” I have to sit there and take a step back and ask, do I want to start something like this because I want to put my opinion on everybody or do I think it’s good for the industry? Right now, I’ve come to a happy medium, that Image Comics becomes an example. I’m not talking in terms of the quality of the product. I’m talking of an example to show that creative people can leave the barn and go and survive. Maybe you can argue whether we’re surviving good, bad, or indifferent. But, that’s irrelevant. I’m just saying that we’re surviving, period, which wasn’t a big thing 2-3 years ago. If you want to follow, there are new examples out there (Legends imprint, Malibu’s Bravura). There are things out there now where you can take another path down the road. Whether they pick the example is not really my fight



"I have, like, 700 rejection letters. I still keep them.



anymore.

MARK: *As one of the most visible and influential people in the industry, what are you doing and what can you do to aid new talent or creators?*

TODD: Good one. Open the doors again. Open the doors so that there are more doors there. When I broke in, there was just Marvel, DC, and a couple smaller companies. There was just a finite number of places you could sell yourself to. But, now there are a lot more places where people can get work to start with. In terms of me personally, I try to go over people's portfolios at conventions, as I don't really have the time to go over kids' stuff as much as possible. If I'm lacking in something, this is probably an area I could do better in. I'm not putting as much effort into trying to get kids into the business as I should be. **Rob Liefeld** and **Jim Lee** hire 10 new guys a year. I'll have to figure something out.

MARK: *It seems that, if you want to break into the industry, you'll have to work at a Marvel or DC or Valiant.*

TODD: I'd like to be able to give some guidance. But, I also have the attitude of when I broke in. I kicked and screamed and clawed my way to the top. I like to see people who are hungry. I don't want to see people coming to me saying, "Hey, you're **Todd McFarlane**, can you put in a good word for me?" I never expected any of that when I got into the business. I expected my work would do the talking for me.

MARK: *A lot has been written about your recent achievements, but how did you actually get your start in comics? How did you break in?*

TODD: The same way everybody else does — send your samples off for a year and a half and then finally somebody gives you a call and goes, "This ain't that shitty. We can give you a couple pages of work." Mine was in a back-up story in **Steve Englehart's** COYOTE book for Epic in 1984. One thing leads to another. Once you get your first gig, it's always easier to get your second gig and your third gig and your fourth. You just climb the ladder. It's like starting in the mail room and moving yourself, keep getting promotions. Again, I sent out 1,400 packages. I have, like, 700 rejection letters. I still keep them. I should take them around with me so when the kids go, "I sent out two letters and I don't know what the problem is." I can dump a bagful of rejection letters. People who write rejection letters are actually very nice about it. The people who think your work sucks just throw your stuff in the trash and never respond.

MARK: *Dave Sim seems to think the answer is just to self-publish. Would you recommend some new creator to self-publish something?*

TODD: It depends on what their motivation is. If you want to do superhero stuff, I would take the route I took. Go out there, work on a book, and make it so the day you quit . . . the longer I stayed on SPIDER-MAN, the longer you stay on any book, the better it makes it when you do your self-publishing book. I always knew that, even though I wanted to self-publish four years earlier, the longer I hung around, the better I'd be in the long run for it. Learn your trade, and when you leave you've a built in audience going with you.

MARK: *Let's go back to SPAWN for a moment. Do you have a definite ending set to SPAWN like Dave Sim does for CEREBUS?*

TODD: Yeah, in my mind I do. He has a finite amount of power. Those numbers in that power meter of his keep going down. Could I technically give him more energy points? Yeah, I guess, but that's cheating the public, too. Maybe in 12 years when he's down to zero, I might go, he's pretty popular. He's like Mickey Mouse now. It would be a shame to kill him. Then, maybe, I'd have to go back and keep him around. But, for right now, someday I could see him running out of power when I want to go on to something else.

MARK: *Do you want to globalize the character, have him appear in Europe, Russia, Japan?*

TODD: Actually, we've a deal with Italy, France, and Spain right now. They're being published over there right now. I think all of globalization will go in part and parcel in getting him out to the world. Once you get out to the world, someone, somewhere always wants to do something with your character somehow,

People who write them are very nice about it.”

someway.

MARK: *A Violator mini-series is set for '94.*

TODD: It's being drawn right now by **Bart Sears** and being inked by **Mark Pennington** and written by **Alan Moore.** When I left Marvel, I had a character I helped in the creation of, Venom. I never really got to play with him. When I got to do my own Spidey book, I kept asking for Venom and he was always tied up. So, when I left, I wanted to come up with something I could play with. I've always liked monsters. If you actually look at that whole run on SPIDER-MAN, it was nothing but monsters: the Lizard, Sasquatch, Morbius, Hobgoblin, and Ghost Rider. That's all I had in there, monsters. I like drawing cool fangs. The Violator is my attempt to come up with another major villain. If I come up with a storyline, at the end of this I want to make him the baddest, toughest on Earth. Right now he's tied to Hell. So, I have to figure out a storyline that puts him back on Earth permanently. That's what I told **Alan Moore**. He has to be stuck on Earth after his mini-series is over. That's all I asked for. I want to then make it so he can appear anytime. It doesn't have to have some kind of Hell connection. I want to get away from the Hell aspect as SPAWN goes on and on. Hopefully, Violator will be in all the video games and animation and movies. So, he becomes the equivalent of the Joker or Doc Ock.

MARK: *Developing a life on his own.*

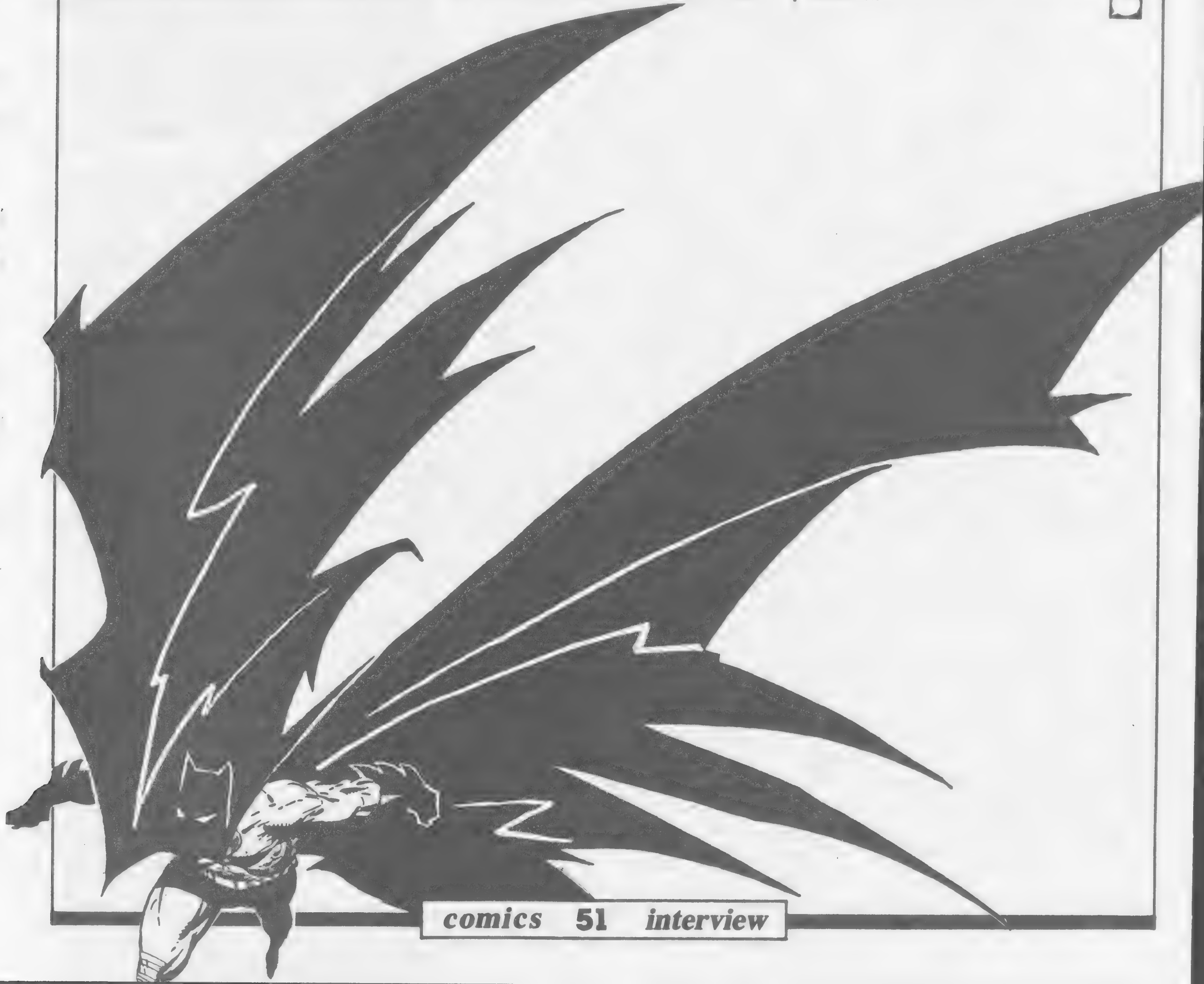
TODD: I want them to care about the bad guys. He's twisted and he'll kill. So, when he goes and challenges Spawn, there's a challenge there.

MARK: *Do you see Spawn living beyond your death?*

TODD: I would like to say yes, but I don't know that it necessarily has to be Spawn. With all the things that I've got going behind closed doors, once you sell your first idea, the first thing they ask is, what's your second idea? Then they grab my second idea, then the third and the fourth. I don't know which one is really going to tickle the fancy of society, if any of them. You might find the third idea you sell is the one that, for whatever reason, happens to be at the right place at the right time and is the one that will outlive you. Would I like it to be Spawn? Sure I would. Because then I don't have to worry about going and creating a whole 'nother thing all over again and starting the whole process all over again. But, I'm a creative guy. If the Spawn is just a tool to get maybe my third idea for that to the big hit, then that's what I'll do. I'll just have to hopefully know which direction to go to be able to take advantage of this. If anything that I do — I don't care if it's Spawn right now — lives beyond me, that my characters live beyond me, I hope that Spider-Man will live beyond **Steve Ditko**, that **Ditko** still has some control over this character. It comes down to, when I die, if I create a Potato Man, does the **Todd McFarlane** Potato Man estate have any control over that character? If that answer is yes, then I'll have accomplished what I wanted to.

MARK: *And, what would you want them to say about you as a eulogy?*

TODD: He was a fuck but he was fair about it.



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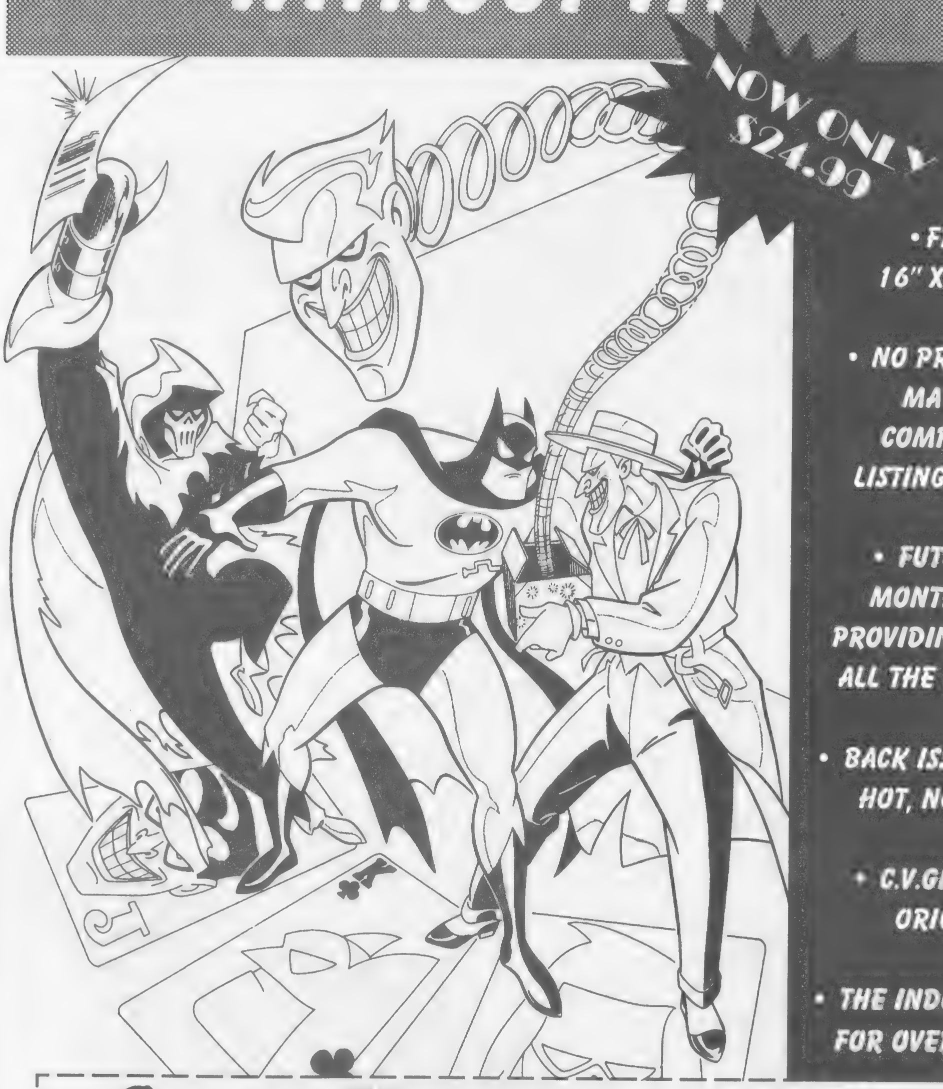

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"Willard was making $80,000 a year from MOON."

FERD JOHNSON

In part 1 of this three-part interview, Ferd told us how he got his start in the industry, and how MOON MULLINS, the work he's most famous for, got its start in comics. He shared stories about cartoonists he's known, past and present, with particular emphasis on MOON's creator, Frank Willard. Here, in part 2, we continue to hear the reminiscenses and insights of the man who has logged more years on a single feature than any other creator in American comics' history . . .

SHEL DORF: *When did you leave Chicago for California?*

FERD JOHNSON: Well, we lived in Florida. **Willard** had a home down there, and the summers were so terrible — hot, muggy, full of bugs and mosquitos — we'd take off in May every year and go to a different resort, anywhere from Maine to Mexico City, spend the summer and then come back in the fall.

SHEL: *You were married and with your own family by then, weren't you? How did you meet your wife? How did you change from a guy living in a hotel to a married man with a wife?*

FERD: The Academy of Fine Arts in Chicago had a cartoon class, and they tried to get different cartoonists to teach it, but no one would. So they hit on me, and since it paid $15 a week, I said, "I don't know anything about cartoons, but I'll do it." So I went down there one evening, and in the next room was a group of people studying interior decorating. My future wife had come up from Louisville to go to this place, and she was curious about us. She'd come in and watch us, and that's how I met her.

SHEL: *Was she cute, Ferd?*

FERD: Oh, a doll! *(Laughter.)* Of course she was! Anyway, the class was going to Europe, and she was all hot and bothered about that. I was kind of nuts about her — we'd had a lot of dates — and I told her if she'd not go to Europe but go with me, that we'd get married and go to Florida, which is what she chose. And I said, "Someday I'll take you to Europe if you do that," and that was the agreement. Thirty years later I kept that promise!

SHEL: *What was her maiden name?*

FERD: **White. Doris Lee White,** a real Southern gal. Everybody liked to get her talking because she'd talk with that Southern accent.

SHEL: *When did Tom come along?*

FERD: He was born in 1932, so he's 58, I guess, or 59. *(Laughter.)* It changes every year — I can't keep up with it!

SHEL: *Those were tough times to be raising a family — during the Depression and everything.*

FERD: Well, during the Depression **Willard** was making $80,000 a year off of MOON. It was one of the biggest. We had about 350 papers.

SHEL: *And how much did you make?*

FERD: Oh, I'd say about $7,000, in that vicinity. I never asked for a raise once, but he always gave them to me. I had SLIM going at $50 a week, and I illustrated **Westbrook Pegler's** sports stories. He was a big writer then. And then I often did cartoons for the advertising department. I had one regular

Our interview subject in typical pose. For two thirds of a century, he worked on MOON MULLINS from this drawing board and others like it.

Photo: Bill Janocha

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"We worked 24-hour shifts because we played too much in-between."

thing called WANT-AD WANDA that ran for a year or two. But I was making pretty good dough. I was making $90 a week when I got married, and at that time that was pretty good.

SHEL: *You really had professional security from a very early age. So when you got married and moved to Florida it was a different lifestyle for you.*

FERD: Florida was great during winter months, and in spring it was good because you could go fishing — great fishing. And then we'd take off to different places. We went to Maine several years, and then we went to North Carolina to a place called Highlands, the highest spot in the mountains up there. It was so rustic . . . you talk about BARNEY GOOGLE & SNUFFY SMITH being exaggerated — it wasn't! These people wore coonskin caps, they carried flintlock rifles around to shoot squirrels, they lived off the land. At night the hounds would be howling, chasing all over the mountains for raccoon and stuff like that. It was really delightful. We lived at an inn, and **Bobby Jones**, the golfer, had a place up there. **Willard** played golf with him. They'd have barn dances at night. **Bobby Jones** loved to dance.

SHEL: *What was your work approach like then? Did you and Willard have drawing boards next to each other? What was the physical set-up? How was the strip done? When did you put the lettering on, and things like that? Could you go into that a little bit?*

FERD: We'd talk over the ideas first. I was almost an editor for him — if I liked them, he drew them up — just like Tom is for me. Then he'd pencil them in, turn them over to me, and I'd do the lettering and start the backgrounds. At that time he was doing the figures, too, but after a while I started doing the figures.

SHEL: *Did you do six strips at once?*

FERD: Yes, always. And the Sunday page took an extra day.

SHEL: *How many panels was the Sunday page in those days?*

FERD: Twelve panels. In those days newspapers used them full-page. The daily strip was six columns, where now they're about three and a half. So then you had a chance to do a lot of shading and so on.

Now, we worked in 24-hour shifts, generally, because we played too much in between. We played golf every day of the week probably, so we had to work at night. Sometimes he'd call me at 11:00 at night, and I'd have to wade in snow up to my belt to get to his place, which was a mile or two away. He'd start out with a full bottle of gin, and when morning came it was gone. My job was to get rid of the bottle, which he'd sneak in while his wife was out during the daytime. I would take the bottle and throw it in the snowbank on my way home. Come spring, when the snow melted, there was a glass bottle fence!

SHEL: *How could he draw, having that much liquor in him?*

FERD: He had an amazing capacity. He could play golf like nobody's business when he was stewed. We belonged to the local golf club — I had to play with him all the time. *(Laughter.)* It was a tough part of the job — and these actors and guys would come over to me and whisper, "Has he been drinking?" I'd say no and they'd play with him, but if I said he'd been drinking all night they wouldn't have a thing to do with him, because he'd do great things when he was stewed. It settled his nerves or something.

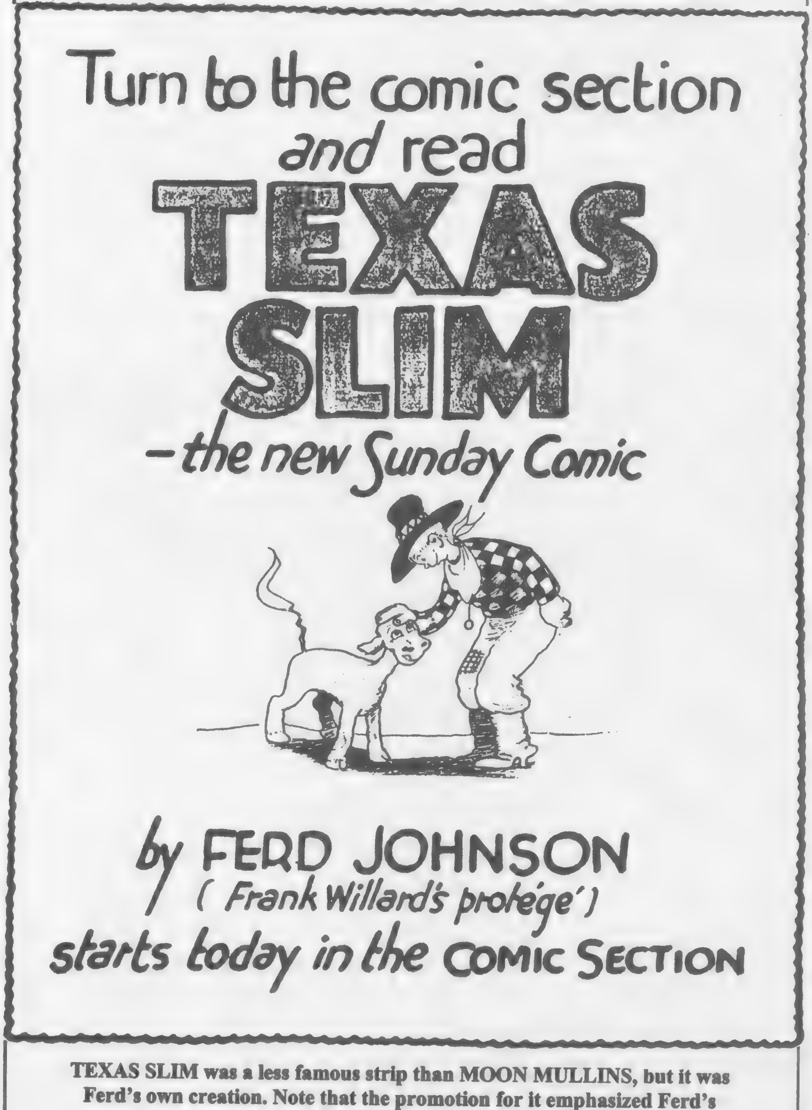
SHEL: *(picking up a strip) What have you got here?*

FERD: This is a xerox of a strip that **Willard** gave to **Mort Walker.** Mort requested a strip — this was before he had BAILEY — and **Willard** gave him one from 1933.

SHEL: *(reading the inscription) "Say, Morton, these drawings you sent me were swell. I'll bet you'll be a big shot cartoonist someday. Willard." Isn't that wonderful!*

FERD: And he is! One of the best in the business.

SHEL: *And a great guy, too. You know,*


Turn to the comic section
and read
TEXAS
SLIM
– the new Sunday Comic
by FERD JOHNSON
(Frank Willard's protégé)
starts today in the COMIC SECTION

TEXAS SLIM was a less famous strip than MOON MULLINS, but it was Ferd's own creation. Note that the promotion for it emphasized Ferd's connection with MOON's creator, Frank Willard.

Data and art: San Francisco Academy of Comic Art

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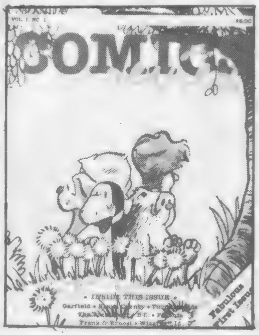
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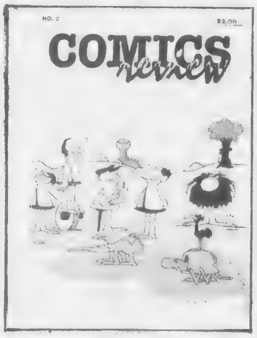
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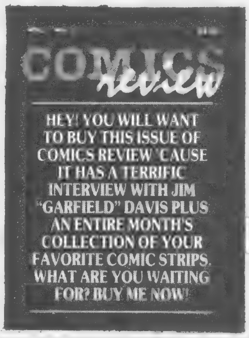
#3 B.C., The Wizard of Id, Bloom County, Beetle Bailey, Blondie, Marvin, Hagar the Horrible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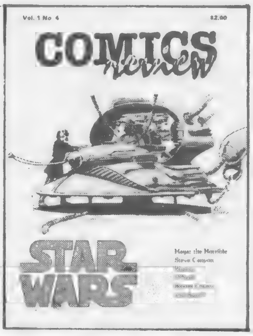
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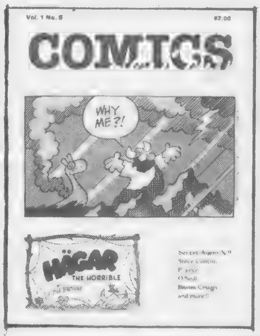
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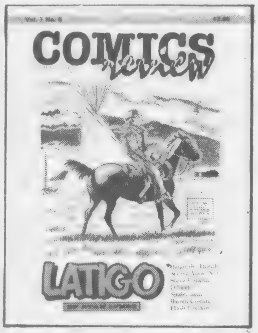
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Gasoline Alley
50

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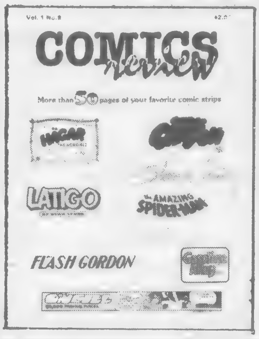
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The AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
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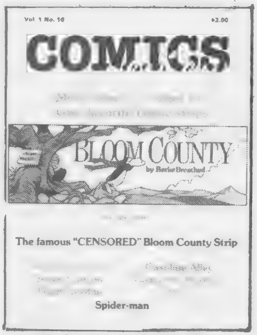
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The famous "CENSORED" Bloom County Strip
Spider-man

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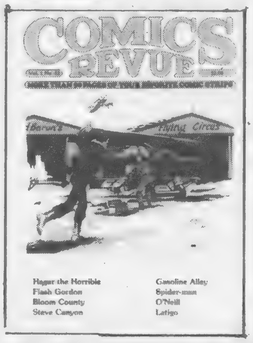
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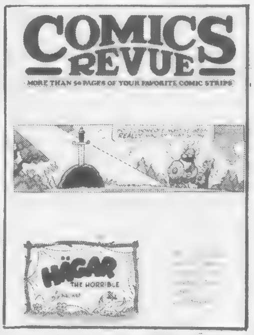
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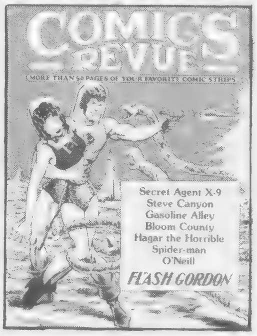
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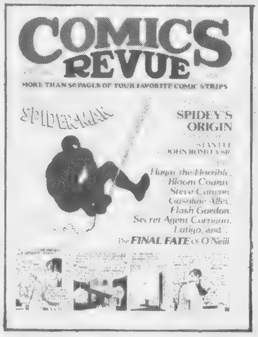
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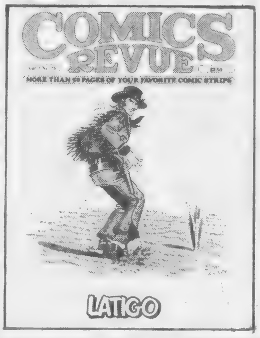
Latigo, and
the FINAL FATE of O'Neill

#14 The Amazing Spider-Man, Bloom County, Steve Canyon, Gasoline Alley, O'Neill, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible; Secret Agent Corrigan, Latigo

#15 Latigo, Secret Agent Corrigan, Bloom County, The Amazing Spider-Man, Hagar the Horrible, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley, Steve Canyon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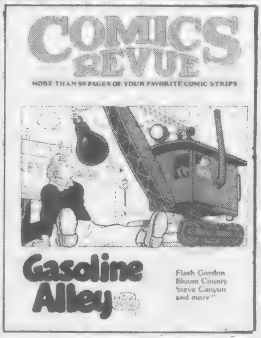
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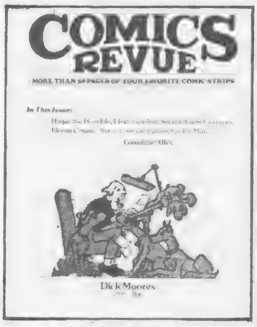
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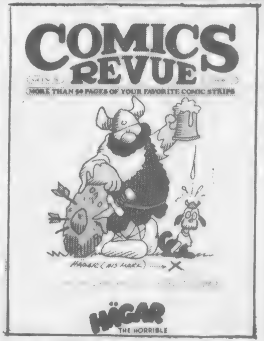
Dick Moores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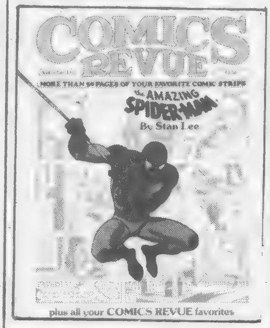
#19 The Amazing Spider-Man, Bloom County, Secret Agent Corrigan, Latigo, Steve Canyon, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, Gasoline Alley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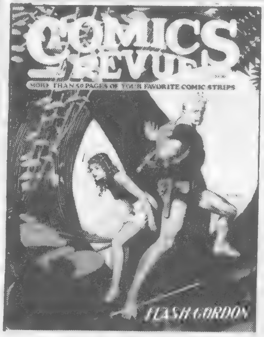
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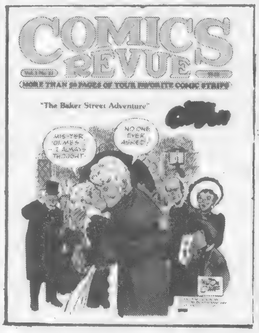
#21 Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, Latigo, Secret Agent Corrigan, Bloom County, The Amazing Spider-Man, Gasoline Alley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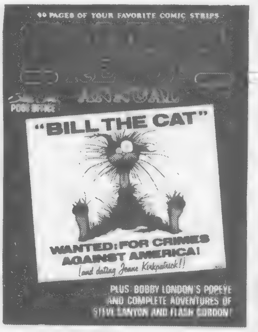
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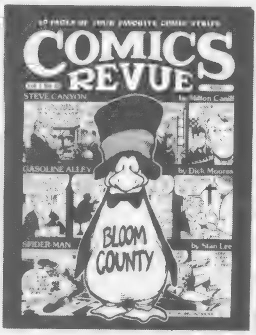
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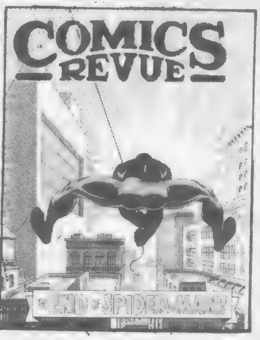
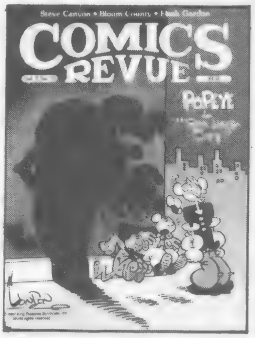

COMICS REVUE
THE END OF SPIDER-MAN!

#23 The Amazing Spider-Man, Bloom County, Secret Agent Corrigan, Latigo, Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley

#24 Popeye, Flash Gordon, Latigo, Bloom County, Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, Secret Agent Corrigan, Gasoline Alley. *COVER: BOBBY LONDON*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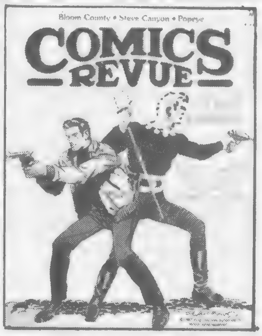
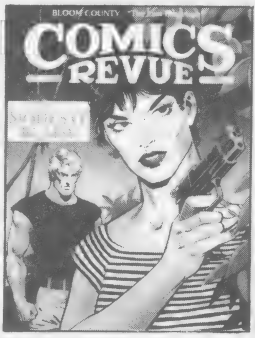
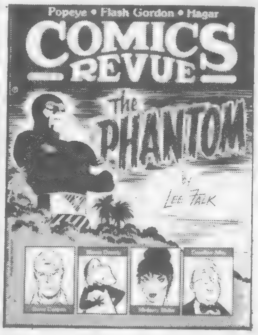
COMICS REVUE
POPEYE


Bloom County • Steve Canyon • Popeye
COMICS REVUE

#25 Secret Agent Corrigan, Popeye, Latigo, Bloom County, Flash Gordon, Steve Canyon, Gasoline Alley. *COVER: GEORGE EVANS*

#26 Modesty Blaise, Bloom County, Latigo, Popeye, Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley


BLOOM COUNTY
COMICS REVUE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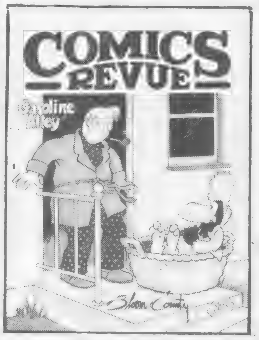
COMICS REVUE
The PHANTOM
by LEE FALK
Modesty Blaise

#27 The Phantom, Bloom County, Modesty Blaise, Hagar the Horrible, Flash Gordon, Popeye, Steve Canyon, Gasoline Alley

#28 Bloom County, Modesty Blaise, Hagar the Horrible, Steve Canyon, The Phantom, Popeye, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley. *COVER: REED WALLER*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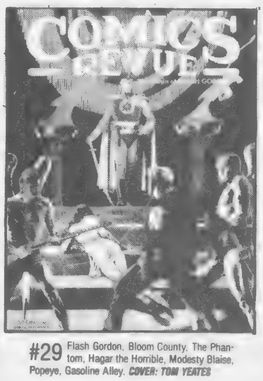
Bloom County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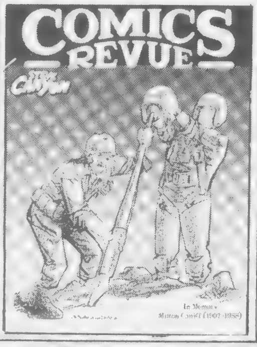
#30 Milton Caniff Memorial Issue. Steve Canyon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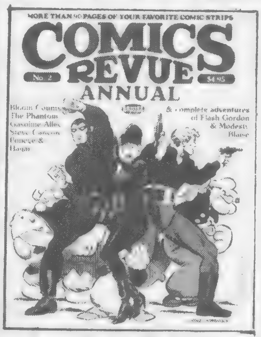
Steve Canyon
In Memory
Milton Caniff (1907-1988)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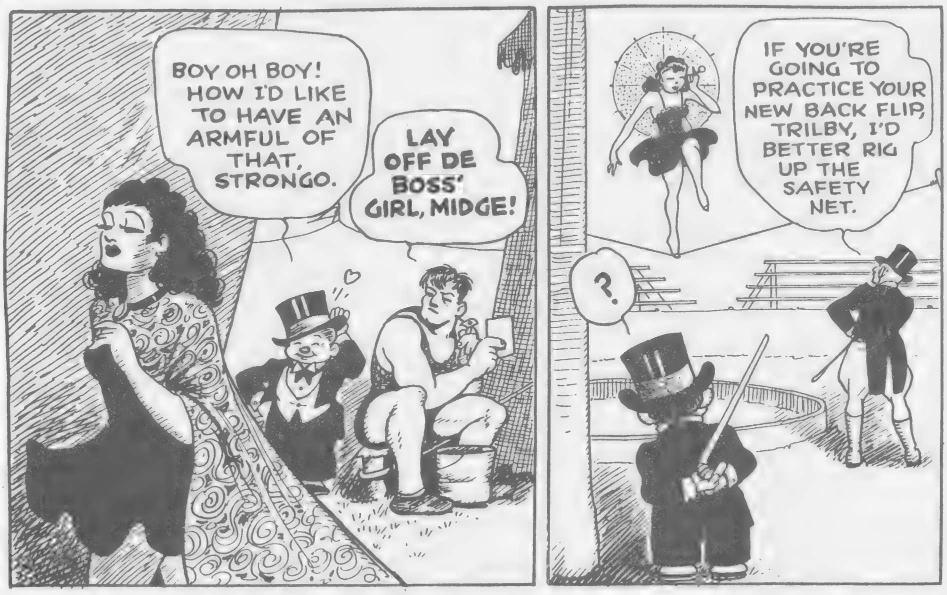
"The bugs got it, and those priceless originals disintegrated."


BOY OH BOY! HOW I'D LIKE TO HAVE AN ARMFUL OF THAT, STRONGO.
LAY OFF DE BOSS' GIRL, MIDGE!
?
IF YOU'RE GOING TO PRACTICE YOUR NEW BACK FLIP, TRILBY, I'D BETTER RIG UP THE SAFETY NET.

At some point in the late 1920s or early '30s, Ferd drew some sample dailies for a proposed strip titled MIDGE, the main character of which was a circus midget. The strip never made it into print, but to give you a taste of it, here's one of those daily episodes.

Mort was sort of in charge of the wake for Milton Caniff at the Society of Illustrators Club.

FERD: He always said his dad thought **Willard** was the greatest cartoonist that ever lived.

SHEL: *Here's a Walt Kelly POGO original. This is a lovely piece. That was a hard one when he died. Walt was a good friend of Milton's and Milt was really grieving. It was a terrible loss. I understand he was quite a guy.*

FERD: I met **Walt Kelly.** He was a great big huge man, better than six feet. He was very nice.

Those are about the only two originals I have. I had a whole lot of them, but we travel so much that we couldn't take everything with us. We put everything we could in a Pontiac and took off, and so I had to leave a lot of stuff in Florida in a trunk. After being out here for several years we sent for the trunk, but when we opened it, the bugs had gotten at it, and all these priceless originals had just disintegrated!

SHEL: *When did you move to California?*

FERD: 1940.

SHEL: *Did Willard move here too?*

FERD: Oh, yes.

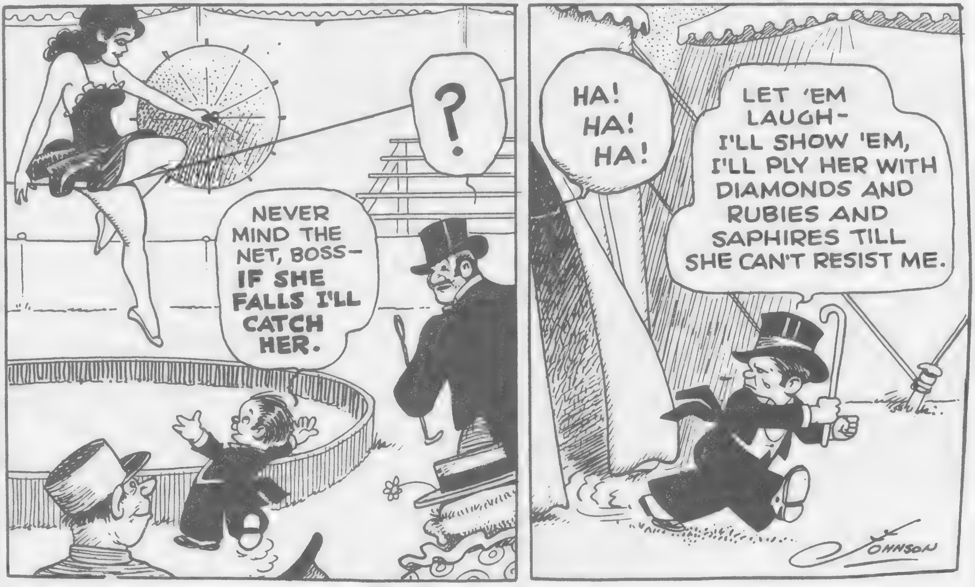
SHEL: *So you two were like Siamese twins. You were together constantly.*

FERD: Well, that's how we got the work out. Wherever he went, I went. If he went to Boston to a clinic for his diabetes, I went along and lived in a hotel. But we got the work out. And then I would have to take it to the office a lot of times, because the mails were too slow.

Out here, we'd work 24 to 36 hours at a stretch. We could do it then, but I couldn't do that now. When he'd call me at night, we'd have to work all that night and all the next day, but it had to be in the office the next day. So I'd grab it, get on a train, go to New York, and take it down and deliver it in person. It was rugged, but it worked out.

SHEL: *How did your wife handle this situation?*

FERD: *(Laughter.)* She didn't like it! And his wife didn't like it! So we'd play golf, and they'd play cards. We lived in


?
NEVER MIND THE NET, BOSS— IF SHE FALLS I'LL CATCH HER.
HA! HA! HA!
LET 'EM LAUGH— I'LL SHOW 'EM, I'LL PLY HER WITH DIAMONDS AND RUBIES AND SAPHIRES TILL SHE CAN'T RESIST ME.
JOHNSON

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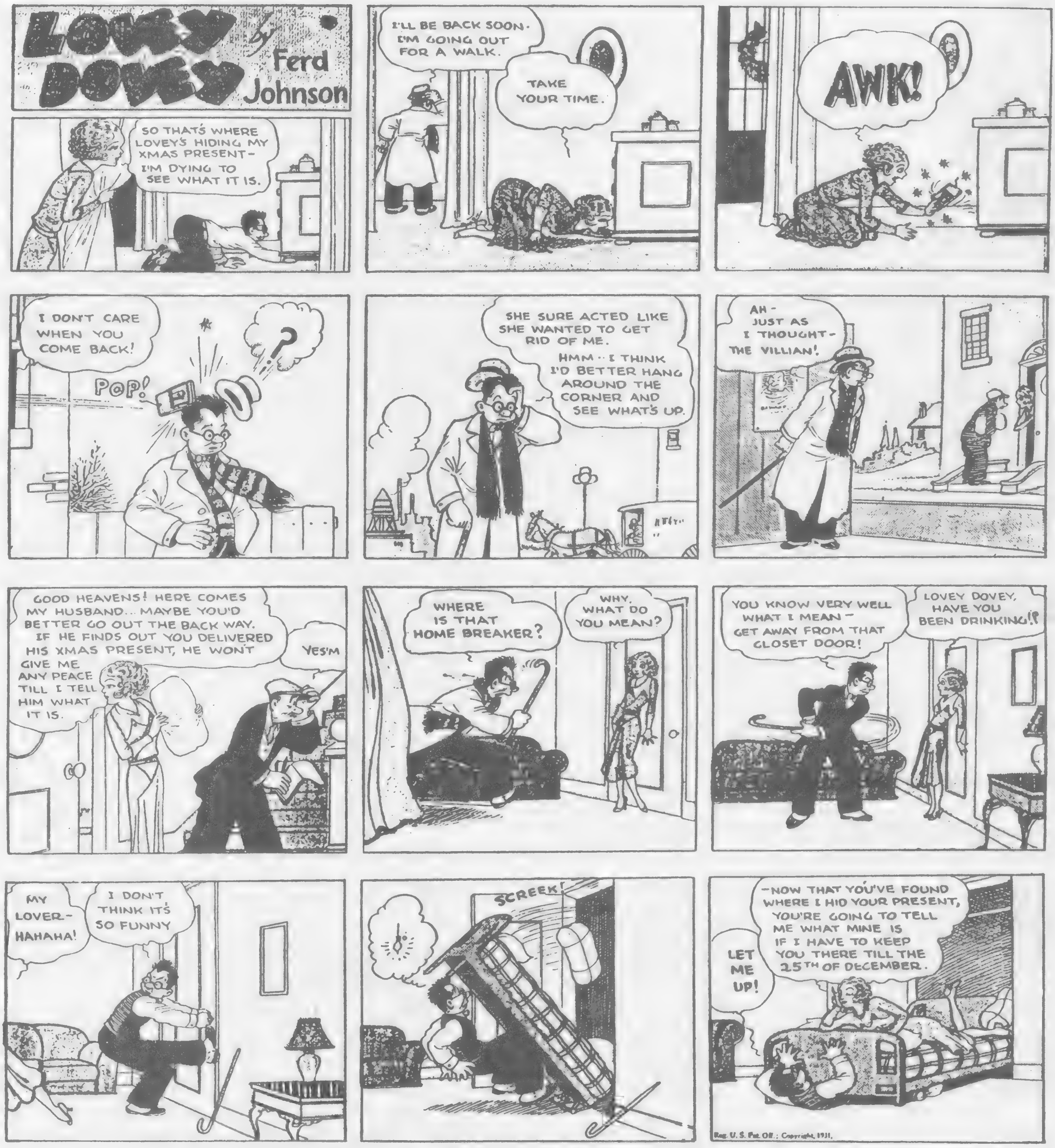
“I thought MOON would last a lifetime the

Data and art: SFACA


LOVEY DOVEY by Ferd Johnson
SO THAT'S WHERE LOVEY'S HIDING MY XMAS PRESENT— I'M DYING TO SEE WHAT IT IS.
I'LL BE BACK SOON. I'M GOING OUT FOR A WALK.
TAKE YOUR TIME.
AWK!
I DON'T CARE WHEN YOU COME BACK!
POP!
?
SHE SURE ACTED LIKE SHE WANTED TO GET RID OF ME.
HMM.. I THINK I'D BETTER HANG AROUND THE CORNER AND SEE WHAT'S UP.
AH— JUST AS I THOUGHT— THE VILLIAN!
GOOD HEAVENS! HERE COMES MY HUSBAND... MAYBE YOU'D BETTER GO OUT THE BACK WAY. IF HE FINDS OUT YOU DELIVERED HIS XMAS PRESENT, HE WON'T GIVE ME ANY PEACE TILL I TELL HIM WHAT IT IS.
YES'M
WHERE IS THAT HOME BREAKER?
WHY, WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU KNOW VERY WELL WHAT I MEAN— GET AWAY FROM THAT CLOSET DOOR!
LOVEY DOVEY, HAVE YOU BEEN DRINKING!?
MY LOVER— HAHAHA!
I DON'T THINK IT'S SO FUNNY
SCREEK!
—NOW THAT YOU'VE FOUND WHERE I HID YOUR PRESENT, YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME WHAT MINE IS IF I HAVE TO KEEP YOU THERE TILL THE 25TH OF DECEMBER.
LET ME UP!
Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.; Copyright, 1931.
TEXAS SLIM
SMAK
AH JESSIE!
?
FERD JOHNSON
Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.; Copyright, 1931.
HELLO, KIDS— HAVE YOU BEEN SAVING THESE LOVEY DOVEY STAMPS?
LOVEY DOVEY STAMP

Ferd's TEXAS SLIM returned in 1931 and '32, but only as the page-bottom companion to his LOVEY DOVEY, a domestic comedy strip. This was a popular theme at the time — a surviving example of it is BLONDIE. In fact, in another medium, domestic comedy retains its popularity to this day, finding expression in a plethora of television sitcoms.

way it was going. Well, it damn near did!”

nice places — always a golf clubhouse.

SHEL: *Did Willard have any children?*

FERD: Yes, he had two. One was a boy who, I heard the other day, had a stroke or a heart attack. The other was a daughter named Priscilla. She got married. They were kids to me then, but now they must be old like we are.

SHEL: *So in 1940 you moved to California. You said you lived in Beverly Hills?*

FERD: Yeah, for 15 years. Across the tracks, of course.

SHEL: (Laughter.) *The “other” part of Beverly Hills. Was Willard living nearby?*

FERD: Yes. He bought the old **Chester Morris** home. I think he paid $25,000 for it — something like that. It made him sore that he had to put new plumbing in for $8,000 so he sold the place at a loss and went down to the El Royale apartment building next to the Wilshire Country Club. He lived there and that's where we worked.

But I lived in a great apartment. It was a two-story building and we had the whole top floor. It was two or three bedrooms and we paid about $200 a month for it. It was great living, and my kid went to high school there. We'd traveled all over so much, different schools, that the kid didn't do well at all, but the minute he hit Beverly High School he just blossomed — he got A's all the time. Then, in those days, the colleges came down to the students. Stanford came down and that's what he picked, so he went through Stanford.

SHEL: *What did he major in?*

FERD: Art. He had charge of the CHAPPEL college newspaper. He had good training that way. Then he joined the service and went to Korea after the shooting was over. They sent him to language school, and the only thing they had open was Korean, so he went to Korea. But the only time he used the language was when they called him to broadcast a baseball game.

SHEL: *In interviews I've heard you say you grew your own assistant. Did you have this in mind all along? As a child did he do drawings?*

FERD; He always liked art. I've got a couple of paintings in there you ought to see. He had a lot of talent. In high school he was in the paper all the time, which was good training — seeing yourself in print.

SHEL: *Did he have any formal training?*

FERD: After he got out of the army he went to Art Center.

SHEL: *Art Center is a very good school!*

FERD: Yes. He went through that in a hurry. When he came out he was a great artist. He could have been a commercial artist, but I needed some help, so I asked him to come with me if he would like it. And he got to thinking, he would rather do that than draw pots and pans for the rest of his life. So he came along. And the kid's got a mind! He has ideas and he's a damned good artist. He kept MOON going. I couldn't have done it nearly as well if he hadn't been around. I hope he can do a strip on his own — at least a panel — because he's got the ability.

SHEL: *Has he got anything in the works now?*

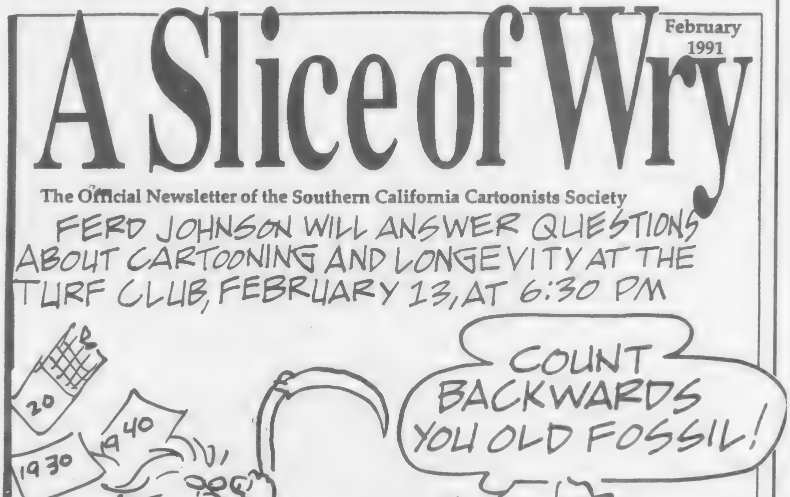
FERD: I think he's got something on his mind, but I don't know what it is.

SHEL: *Well, I'd love to see the dynasty continue.*

FERD: A lot of people thought, “Well, he'll carry on MOON.” I thought MOON would last a lifetime the way it was going. Well, it damn near did!

SHEL: *Did Tribune Media Syndicate give any reasons why they killed MOON MULLINS?*

FERD: They said the CHICAGO TRIBUNE dropped it. Some editor there didn't like it; he thought I was using old stuff. Well, maybe unconsciously I was — the old type humor — and they wanted something different. MOON had been losing papers over the last eight or nine years, one at a time. New guys come along and the editors want something new, so the old guys have to go. Finally, when the TRIBUNE dropped it, that was it. The TRIBUNE was paying $400 a week for it, and I guess they didn't want to pay that much for a strip they could do without. And the syndicate profit didn't



February 1991

A Slice of Wry

The Official Newsletter of the Southern California Cartoonists Society

FERD JOHNSON WILL ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT CARTOONING AND LONGEVITY AT THE TURF CLUB, FEBRUARY 13, AT 6:30 PM

Luncheon: 12 noon, February 27, The Country Inn

Ferd contributed this cover to the February, 1991 issue of the Southern California Cartoonists Society's newsletter.

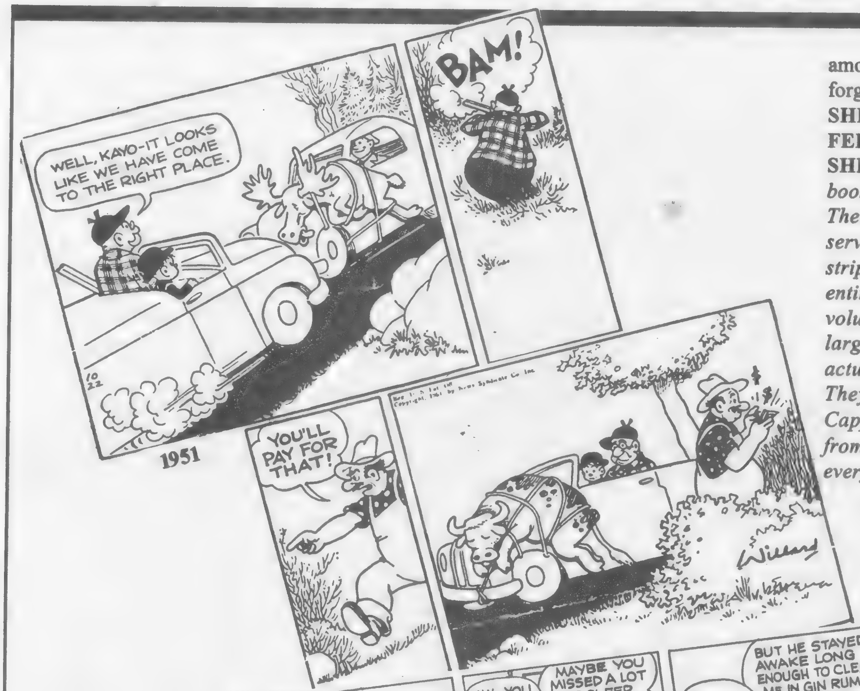
"Her name was Outcault. I said, 'Related to the

amount to much, so they just decided to forget it.

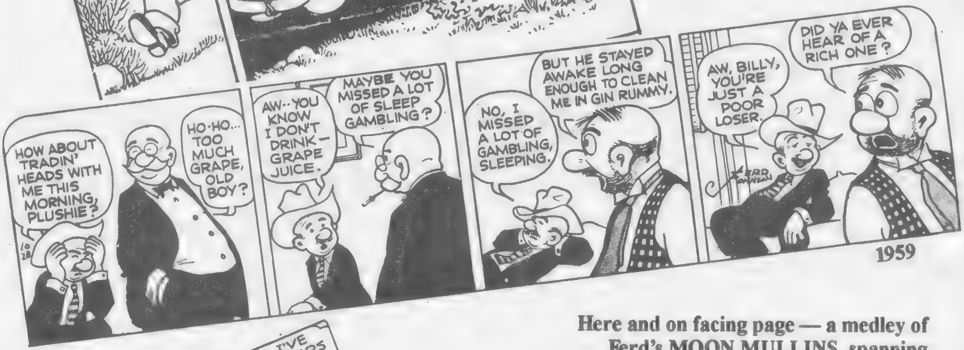
SHEL: *And when did it end?*

FERD: June 2, 1991.

SHEL: *Do you have any plans of doing books, collections of MOON MULLINS? There's a real trend nowadays to preserve all these great years of comic strips. Kitchen Sink Press is doing the entire run of LI'L ABNER one year per volume and they're printing the strips large and in better shape than they actually appeared in the newspapers. They borrowed the proofs from Al Capp's widow and they're shooting right from them, retouching the blacks and everything, the way I did the Blackthorne*

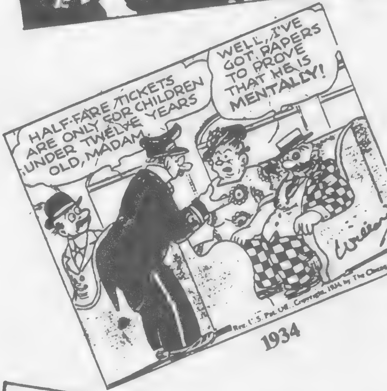

WELL, KAYO-IT LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE.
10 22
BAM!
YOU'LL PAY FOR THAT!
Willard

1951

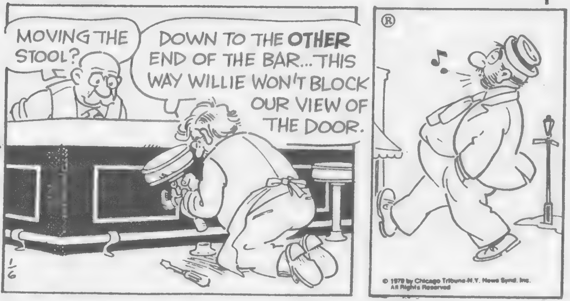

HOW ABOUT TRADIN' HEADS WITH ME THIS MORNING, PLUSHIE?
10 28
HO-HO... TOO MUCH GRAPE, OLD BOY?
AW-- YOU KNOW I DON'T DRINK-- GRAPE JUICE.
MAYBE YOU MISSED A LOT OF SLEEP GAMBLING?
NO, I MISSED A LOT OF GAMBLING, SLEEPING.
BUT HE STAYED AWAKE LONG ENOUGH TO CLEAN ME IN GIN RUMMY.
AW, BILLY, YOU'RE JUST A POOR LOSER.
DID YA EVER HEAR OF A RICH ONE?
FERD

1959

Here and on facing page — a medley of Ferd's MOON MULLINS, spanning his very, very long run on the strip.


HALF-FARE TICKETS ARE ONLY FOR CHILDREN UNDER TWELVE YEARS OLD, MADAM.
WELL, I'VE GOT PAPERS TO PROVE THAT HE IS MENTALLY!
Willard
Copyright, 1934, by The Chicago Tribune

1934


MOVING THE STOOL?
DOWN TO THE OTHER END OF THE BAR... THIS WAY WILLIE WON'T BLOCK OUR VIEW OF THE DOOR.
1 6
®
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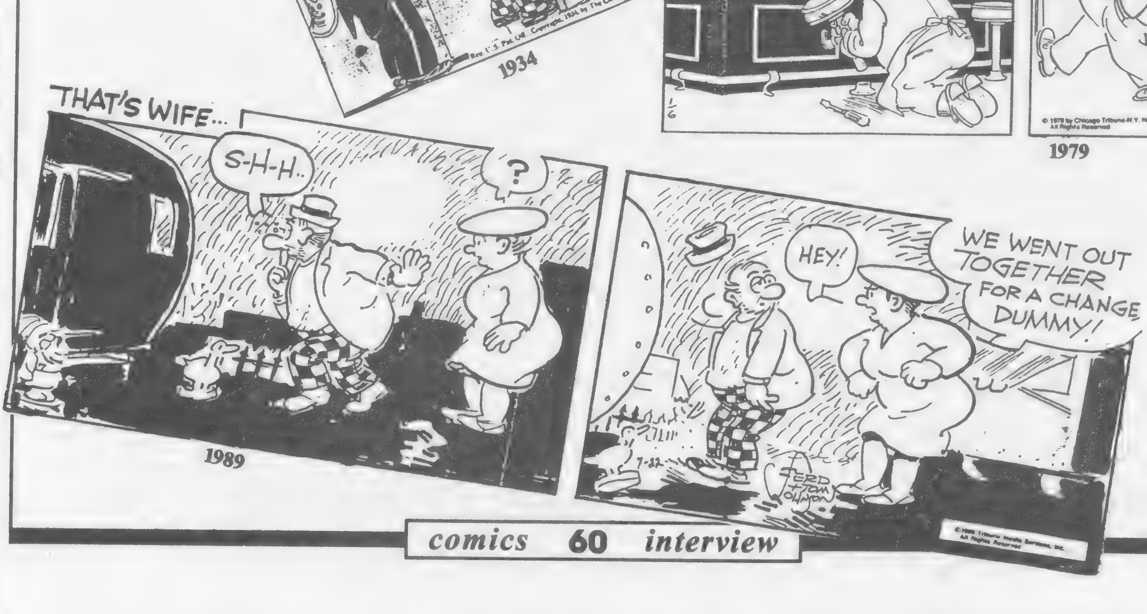
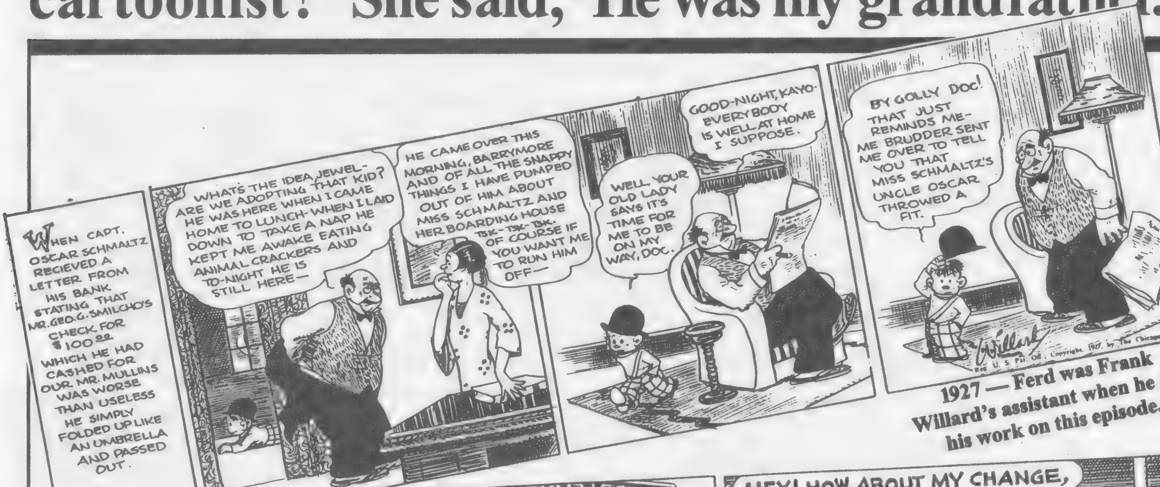
1979

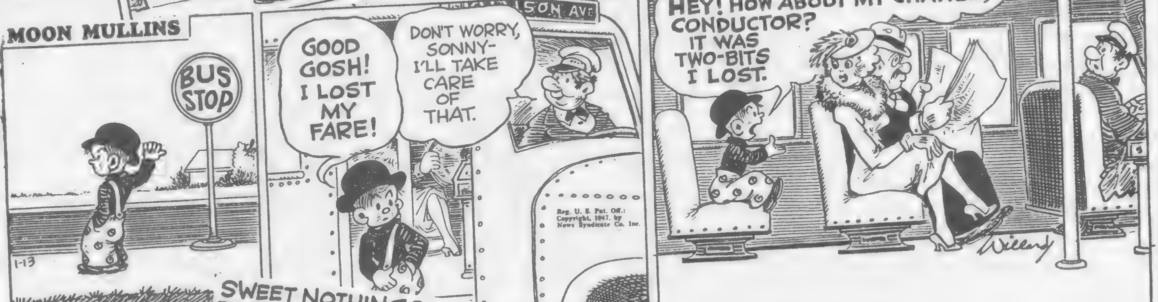

THAT'S WIFE...
S-H-H..
?
HEY!
WE WENT OUT TOGETHER FOR A CHANGE DUMMY!
7-22
FERD + TOM JOHNSON

1989

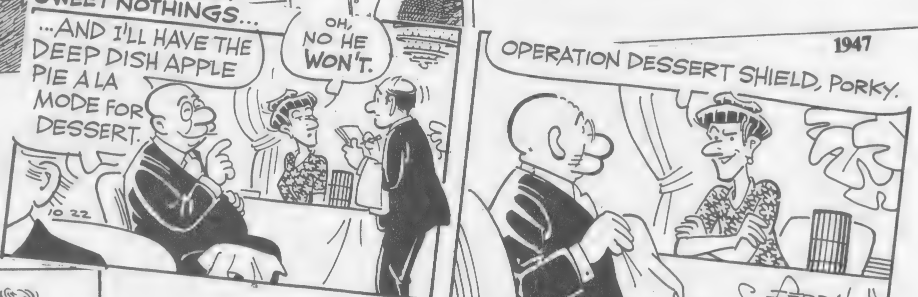
cartoonist?' She said, 'He was my grandfather.' "


When Capt. Oscar Schmaltz recieved a letter from his bank stating that Mr. Geo. G. Smilcho's check for $100.00 which he had cashed for our Mr. Mullins was worse than useless he simply folded up like an umbrella and passed out.
WHAT'S THE IDEA JEWEL- ARE WE ADOPTING THAT KID? HE WAS HERE WHEN I CAME HOME TO LUNCH- WHEN I LAID DOWN TO TAKE A NAP HE KEPT ME AWAKE EATING ANIMAL CRACKERS AND TO-NIGHT HE IS STILL HERE—
HE CAME OVER THIS MORNING, BARRYMORE AND OF ALL THE SNAPPY THINGS I HAVE PUMPED OUT OF HIM ABOUT MISS SCHMALTZ AND HER BOARDING HOUSE TSK-TSK-TSK. OF COURSE IF YOU WANT ME TO RUN HIM OFF—
GOOD-NIGHT, KAYO- EVERYBODY IS WELL AT HOME I SUPPOSE.
WELL, YOUR OLD LADY SAYS IT'S TIME FOR ME TO BE ON MY WAY, DOC.
BY GOLLY DOC! THAT JUST REMINDS ME- ME BRUDDER SENT ME OVER TO TELL YOU THAT MISS SCHMALTZ'S UNCLE OSCAR THROWED A FIT.
Willard
Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.: Copyright, 1927, by The Chicago Tribune

1927 — Ferd was Frank Willard's assistant when he did his work on this episode.


MOON MULLINS
BUS STOP
1-13
GOOD GOSH! I LOST MY FARE!
DON'T WORRY, SONNY- I'LL TAKE CARE OF THAT.
...SON AVE
Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.: Copyright, 1947, by News Syndicate Co. Inc.
HEY! HOW ABOUT MY CHANGE, CONDUCTOR? IT WAS TWO-BITS I LOST.
Willard

1947


SWEET NOTHINGS...
...AND I'LL HAVE THE DEEP DISH APPLE PIE A LA MODE FOR DESSERT.
OH, NO HE WON'T.
10-22
OPERATION DESSERT SHIELD, PORKY.
Ferd & Tom Johnson
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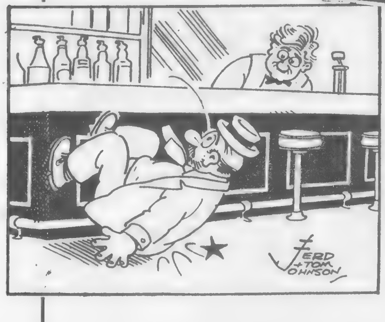
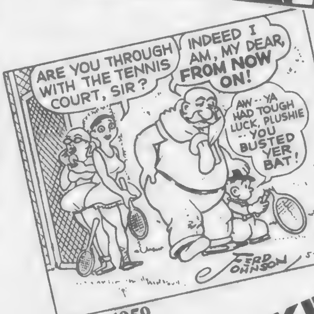
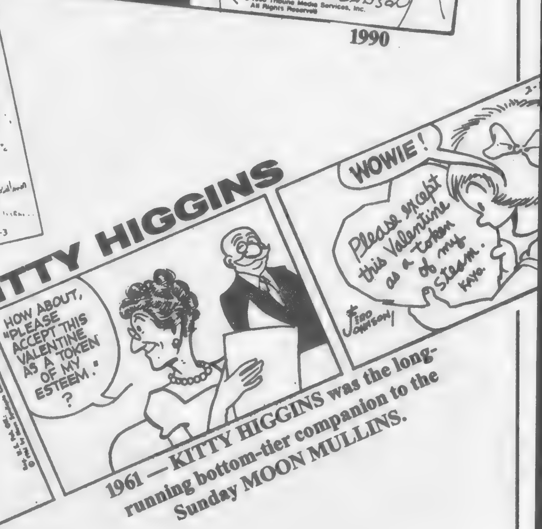
1990


Ferd & Tom Johnson


ARE YOU THROUGH WITH THE TENNIS COURT, SIR?
INDEED I AM, MY DEAR, FROM NOW ON!
AW—YA HAD TOUGH LUCK, PLUSHIE—YOU BUSTED YER BAT!
Ferd Johnson
5-3

1959


KITTY HIGGINS
WHAT CAN YA SAY ON A VALENTINE THAT AIN'T SLUSHY?
HOW ABOUT, "PLEASE ACCEPT THIS VALENTINE AS A TOKEN OF MY ESTEEM."?
WOWIE!
Please accept this Valentine as a token of my esteem. Kayo
Ferd Johnson

1961 — KITTY HIGGINS was the long-running bottom-tier companion to the Sunday MOON MULLINS.

DICK TRACY reprints, so consequently the bookstores are filled with reprints of the great old strips. There's a whole series of LITTLE NEMO books, Cliff Sterrett's POLLY AND HER PALS, lots of history.

FERD: Incidentally, did you know that a little while ago in a local art school there was a very pretty lady sitting next to me. Her name came up, and it was **Outcault.** I said, "You wouldn't by any chance be related to the cartoonist who started our

"They colored the kid's nightshirt yellow."

business, would you?" She said, "Yes, he was my grandfather."

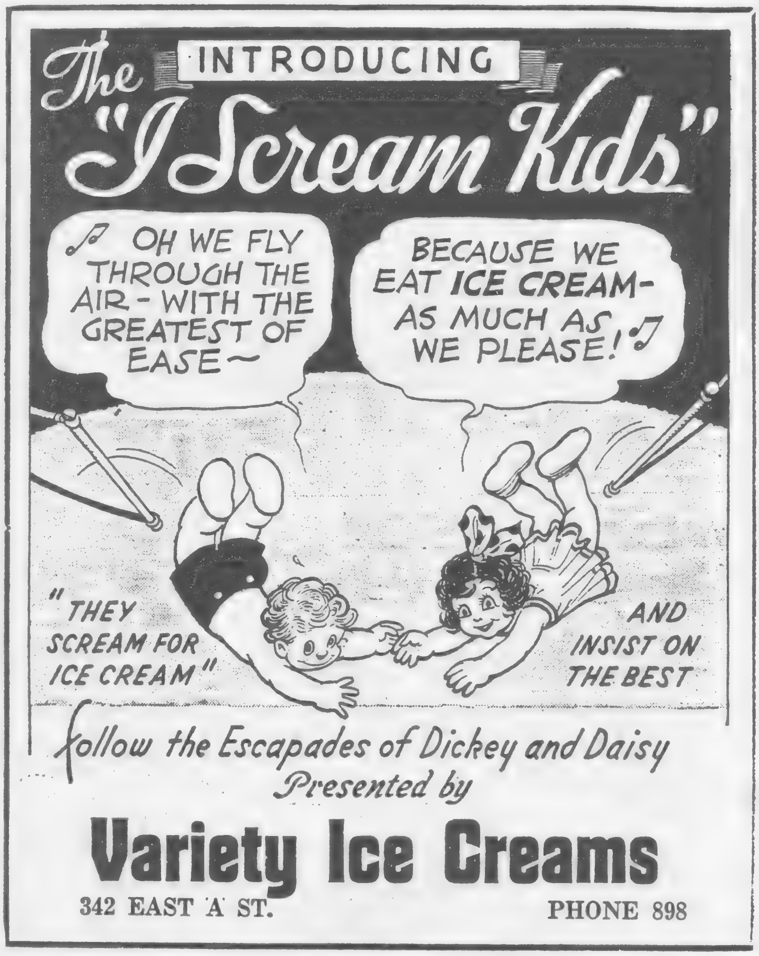
SHEL: *Isn't that incredible? You know, I met her this afternoon in Roger Armstrong's watercolor class. Roger pointed her out to me.*

FERD: Yeah, that was her. She lives in South Laguna. She's a delightful gal. I went down there with **Karl Heubenthal** and she had old originals of BUSTER BROWN and all that bunch. And you know how the strips got started, don't you?

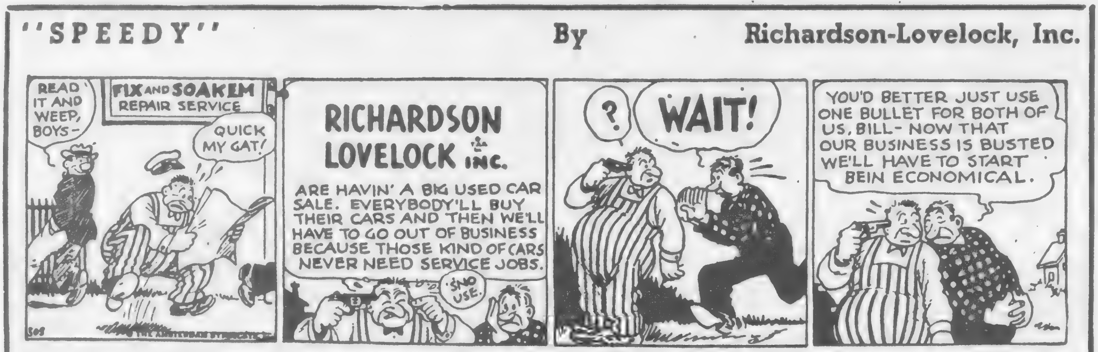
SHEL: *No, I don't.*

FERD: Well, **Richard Outcault** was a great artist — cartoonist — and they gave him a lot of space in the old NEW YORK WORLD, and he had a whole big page all drawn up but there was a hole in the middle. He didn't know what to put in there, so he put this kid with a nightshirt in there, and instead of a balloon he started writing what the kid was saying in the nightshirt. Well, **Hearst** liked it so much that he grabbed it away from the WORLD. Things were bouncing back and forth between **Hearst** and the WORLD. The WORLD had just started using color, and they colored this kid's nightshirt yellow. That's how yellow journalism got its name.

SHEL: *I didn't think the history of cartooning could be as influential as it's turned out to be, because it was disposable literature. People didn't save the Sunday funnies, they read them and threw them away. Also, the papers were*


The INTRODUCING "I Scream Kids"
♪ OH WE FLY THROUGH THE AIR - WITH THE GREATEST OF EASE~
BECAUSE WE EAT ICE CREAM - AS MUCH AS WE PLEASE! ♪
"THEY SCREAM FOR ICE CREAM"
AND INSIST ON THE BEST
Follow the Escapades of Dickey and Daisy
Presented by
Variety Ice Creams
342 EAST 'A' ST.
PHONE 898

Between 1938 and '42, Ferd drew a series of ads which were syndicated for use by local businesses. Above, here and on facing page, are ads used by a number of small, local dairies. Below is a used car ad which, again, was used by establishments in various locales. Note that in all cases, the ad is designed so the name and address of the business using it can be dropped in.


''SPEEDY'' By Richardson-Lovelock, Inc.
READ IT AND WEEP, BOYS-
FIX AND SOAKEM REPAIR SERVICE
QUICK MY GAT!
RICHARDSON LOVELOCK & INC.
ARE HAVIN' A BIG USED CAR SALE. EVERYBODY'LL BUY THEIR CARS AND THEN WE'LL HAVE TO GO OUT OF BUSINESS BECAUSE THOSE KIND OF CARS NEVER NEED SERVICE JOBS.
'SNO USE.
?
WAIT!
YOU'D BETTER JUST USE ONE BULLET FOR BOTH OF US, BILL- NOW THAT OUR BUSINESS IS BUSTED WE'LL HAVE TO START BEIN ECONOMICAL.
Ford
MERCURY 8
Lincoln Zephyr V-12
35 EAST 4th ST.
RICHARDSON-LOVELOCK, INC.
PHONE 3174

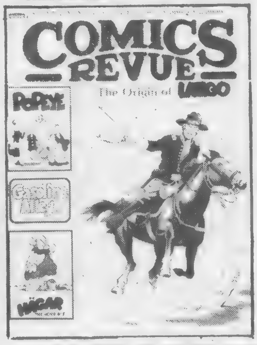
Data and art: SFACA

BACK ISSUES

COMICS REVUE

SINGLE - $5.00
ANY FOUR - $15.00

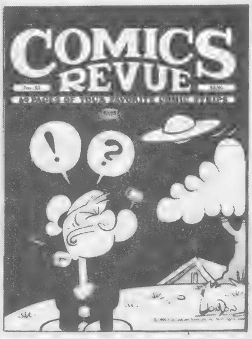
#31 Latigo, Bloom County, The Phantom, Hagar the Horrible, Steve Canyon, Flash Gordon, Popeye, Modesty Blaise, Gasoline Alley. ***COVER: STAN LYNDE***


COMICS REVUE
The Origin of LATIGO
POPEYE
Gasoline Alley
HAGAR

The Phantom • Modesty Blaise • Steve Canyon
COMICS REVUE
GOSH DARN IF THIS ISN'T PULITZER MATERIAL !!

#32 Bloom County, The Phantom, Popeye, Latigo, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, Modesty Blaise, Steve Canyon, Gasoline Alley

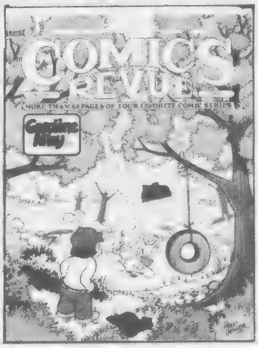
#33 Popeye, Modesty Blaise, Flash Gordon, Bloom County, Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, The Phantom, Gasoline Alley. ***COVER: BOBBY LONDON***

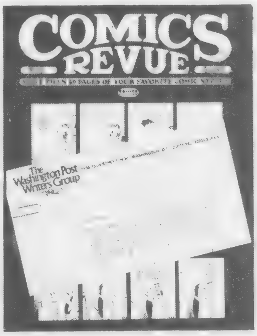

COMICS REVUE
!
?

COMICS REVUE
The PHANTOM
plus . . .
Bloom County
Steve Canyon
Modesty Blaise
Popeye
& Hagar

#34 The Phantom, Bloom County, Modesty Blaise, Hagar the Horrible, Steve Canyon, Popeye, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley, The Wallet Family Tree

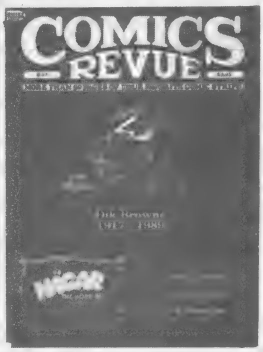
#35 Gasoline Alley, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, Modesty Blaise, Latigo, Popeye, The Phantom, Bloom County, Steve Canyon. ***COVER: REED WALLER***

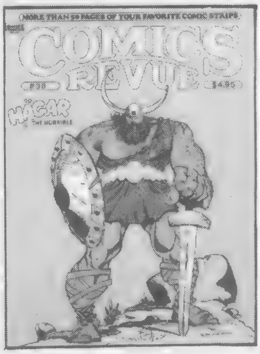

COMICS REVUE
MORE THAN 50 PAGES OF YOUR FAVORITE COMIC STRIPS
Gasoline Alley


COMICS REVUE
The Washington Post Writers Group

#36 Bloom County, The Phantom, Beetle Bailey, Popeye, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, Steve Canyon

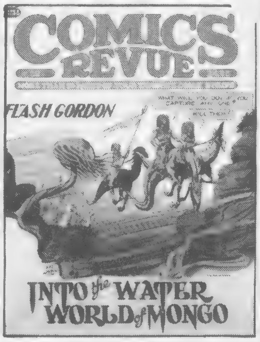
#37 Hagar the Horrible, Steve Canyon, The Phantom, Latigo, Blondie, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley

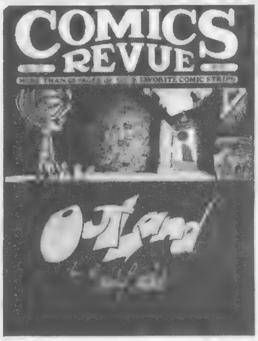

COMICS REVUE
Dik Browne
HAGAR


MORE THAN 50 PAGES OF YOUR FAVORITE COMIC STRIPS
COMICS REVUE
#38
$4.95
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE

#38 Hagar the Horrible, The Phantom, Bloom County, Steve Canyon. ***COVER: WALT SIMONSON***

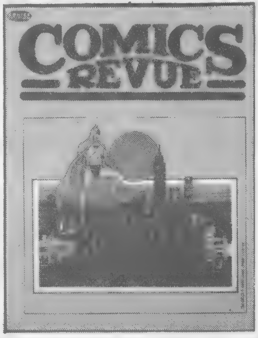
#39 Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, Latigo, Popeye, Steve Canyon, Bloom County, Gasoline Alley

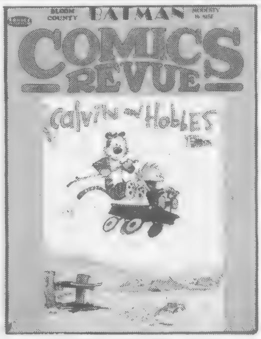

COMICS REVUE
FLASH GORDON
INTO the WATER WORLD of MONGO


COMICS REVUE
MORE THAN 50 PAGES OF YOUR FAVORITE COMIC STRIPS
OUTLAND

#40 Outland, Latigo, Hagar the Horrible, The Phantom, Gasoline Alley, Steve Canyon, Bloom County, Flash Gordon, Modesty Blaise

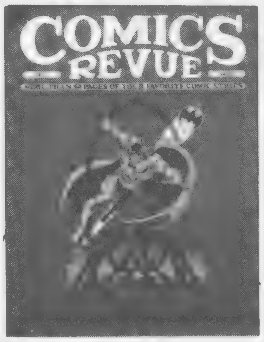
#41 Batman, Outland, Modesty Blaise, Bloom County, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, The Phantom, Gasoline Alley, Steve Canyon, Latigo


COMICS REVUE


BLOOM COUNTY
BATMAN
MODESTY BLAISE
COMICS REVUE
Calvin and Hobbes

#42 Calvin and Hobbes, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley, Modesty Blaise, Outland, Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, The Phantom, Bloom County, Batman

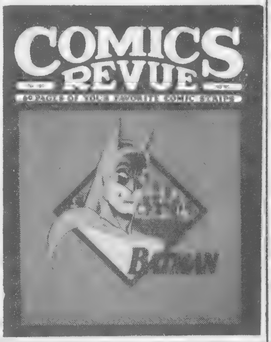
#43 Batman, Bloom County, The Phantom, Hagar the Horrible, Latigo, Gasoline Alley, Flash Gordon, Outland, Steve Canyon, Calvin and Hobbes

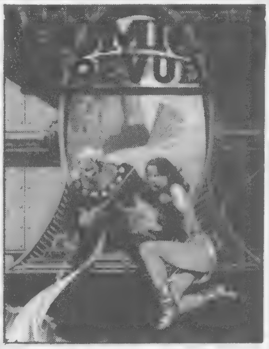

COMICS REVUE
MORE THAN 50 PAGES OF YOUR FAVORITE COMIC STRIPS

COMICS REVUE
BATMAN
Modesty BLAISE

#44 Modesty Blaise, Gasoline Alley, Canyon, Hagar, Flash Gordon, Calvin and Hobbes, The Phantom, Outland, Latigo, Bloom County, Batman ***COVER: TED BOONTHANAKIT***

#45 Batman, Outland, The Phantom, Hagar the Horrible, Blondie, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley, Steve Canyon, Bloom County, Latigo, Calvin and Hobbes, Modesty Blaise


COMICS REVUE
50 PAGES OF YOUR FAVORITE COMIC STRIPS
BATMAN


COMICS REVUE

#46 Flash Gordon, Modesty Blaise, Bloom County, Latigo, The Phantom, Calvin and Hobbes, Steve Canyon, Batman, Gasoline Alley. ***COVER BY TOM YEATES***

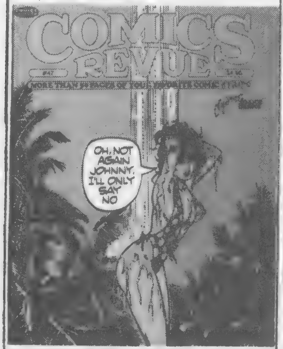
FICTIONEER BOOKS, LTD. • 234 FIFTH AVE. • SUITE 301 • NEW YORK, NY 10001

BACK ISSUES

COMICS REVUE

SINGLE - $5.00
ANY FOUR - $15.00

#47 **New Modesty Blaise, Gasoline Alley and Steve Canyon begin!** Plus Latigo, The Phantom, Calvin and Hobbes, Outland, Flash Gordon, Bloom County and Batman

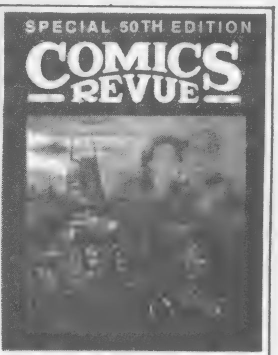

COMICS REVUE
MORE THAN 60 PAGES OF YOUR FAVORITE COMIC STRIPS
OH, NOT AGAIN JOHNNY. I'LL ONLY SAY NO

Calvin and HOBBES BATMAN
COMICS REVUE
60 PAGES OF YOUR FAVORITE COMIC STRIPS
PHANTOM
BAM
BAM

#48 **New Phantom, Latigo and Batman stories begin!** Plus Outland, Gasoline Alley, Flash Gordon, Calvin and Hobbes, Modesty Blaise and Steve Canyon

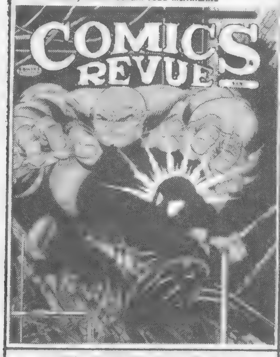
#49 **New Flash Gordon story starts!** Plus Batman, Bloom County, Gasoline Alley, The Phantom, Latigo, Calvin and Hobbes and Modesty Blaise.

GUESS WHO'S BACK
COMICS REVUE
WON'T IT BE FUN?


SPECIAL 50TH EDITION
COMICS REVUE

#50 **GREAT ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!! New Modesty Blaise, The Phantom, Latigo, Bloom stories begin!** Plus Outland, Gasoline Alley, Flash Gordon and Batman. ***COVER: STELFREEZE***

#51 ***Spider-Man begins in this issue!* New Batman story starts!** Plus Bloom County, Flash Gordon, Latigo, Outland, The Phantom, and Modesty Blaise ***COVER: TODD McFARLANE***

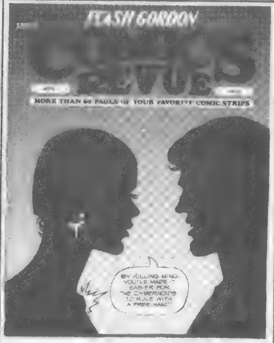

COMICS REVUE

Spider-Man Modesty Blaise BATMAN
COMICS REVUE
MORE THAN 60 PAGES OF YOUR FAVORITE COMIC STRIPS

#52 **New Flash Gordon and Latigo stories begin!** Plus Batman, Bloom County, Amazing Spider-Man, The Phantom and Modesty Blaise. ***COVER: DANY FROLICH***

#53 **New Batman and Modesty Blaise stories begin!** Plus Flash Gordon, The Phantom, Latigo and Amazing Spider-Man.

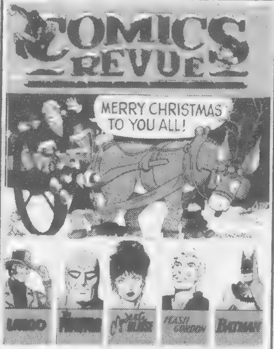
COMICS REVUE
MORE THAN 60 PAGES OF YOUR FAVORITE COMIC STRIPS
Modesty BLAISE


FLASH GORDON
COMICS REVUE
MORE THAN 60 PAGES OF YOUR FAVORITE COMIC STRIPS
BY KILLING MING, YOU'VE MADE IT EASIER FOR THE CYBERNOIDS TO RULE WITH A FREE HAND!

#54 **Complete Flash Gordon story! New Latigo and Phantom stories begin!** Plus Batman, Amazing Spider-Man and Modesty Blaise.

#55 **New Amazing Spider-Man and Flash Gordon stories start!** Plus Bloom County, The Phantom, Latigo, Modesty Blaise and Batman

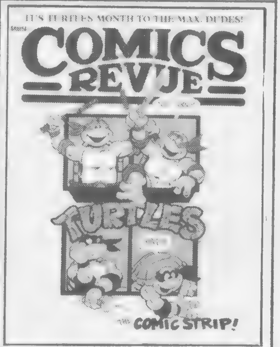
PHANTOM FLASH GORDON Modesty Blaise
COMICS REVUE


COMICS REVUE
MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL!
LATIGO
PHANTOM
Modesty BLAISE
FLASH GORDON
BATMAN

#56 **New Batman and Phantom stories begin!** Plus Gasoline Alley, Modesty Blaise, Bloom County, Flash Gordon, Spider-Man and Latigo

#57 **New Modesty Blaise and Flash Gordon stories begin!** Plus Bloom County, The Phantom, Latigo, Spider-Man, Gasoline Alley and Batman. ***COVER: ROMERO***

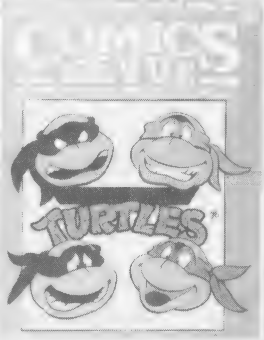
COMICS REVUE
NEW!
Modesty BLAISE


IT'S TURTLES MONTH TO THE MAX, DUDES!
COMICS REVUE
TURTLES
THE COMIC STRIP!

#58 ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles begins! Also new stories start in Gasoline Alley and The Phantom.*** Plus Spider-Man, Modesty Blaise, Flash Gordon, Bloom County, Latigo and Batman

#59 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Batman, Bloom County, The Phantom, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley, Modesty Blaise and Latigo. ***COVER: TODD McFARLANE***

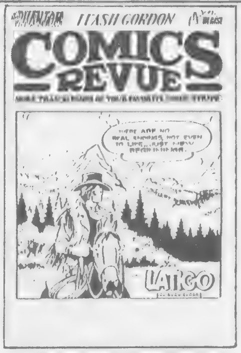
COMICS REVUE


COMICS REVUE
TURTLES

#60 **New Batman, Flash Gordon and Latigo stories begin!** Plus Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Bloom County, The Phantom, Gasoline Alley, Spider-Man and Modesty Blaise

#61 ***Bloom County ends!* New Modesty Blaise, Phantom and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles stories start!** Plus Gasoline Alley, Latigo, Batman, Flash Gordon and Spider-Man

COMICS REVUE
ANY WAY OUT?
FUNNY YOU SHOULD MENTION "OUT".


PHANTOM FLASH GORDON Modesty Blaise
COMICS REVUE
THERE ARE NO REAL ENDINGS, NOT EVEN TO LIFE... JUST NEW BEGINNINGS.
LATIGO

#62 ***Latigo ends!*** Plus Modesty Blaise, The Phantom, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Gasoline Alley, Latigo, Batman, Flash Gordon and Spider-Man

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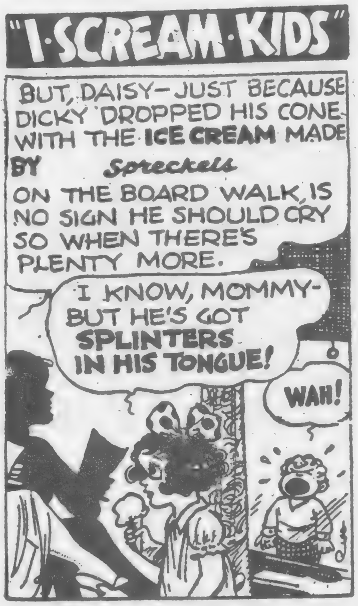
"That's how yellow journalism got its name."


"I·SCREAM·KIDS"
BUT, DAISY—JUST BECAUSE DICKY DROPPED HIS CONE WITH THE ICE CREAM MADE BY Spreckels ON THE BOARD WALK, IS NO SIGN HE SHOULD CRY SO WHEN THERE'S PLENTY MORE.
I KNOW, MOMMY-BUT HE'S GOT SPLINTERS IN HIS TONGUE!
WAH!

very casual about originals. I remember going to the CHICAGO TRIBUNE when Harry Simmons was in charge of the office. My brother and I were big comic fans, and Harry showed us around the office — this was in the '50s. We asked if they had any originals around and he said, "Oh, there's a whole big pile on the cabinet over there. When it gets too big we throw it in the furnace. Take whatever you want." It was mostly Sunday pages, so we took about four Sunday pages of every strip there was and carried them back to the car. It was a bonanza for us, but we were also kind of sad to think that they would have burned the stuff.

FERD: I thought they sent them back to the guys. They did to us.

SHEL: *Not to everyone. No. But Chet, because he worked right in the offices, managed to have quite a bunch of his originals, and they were stored at his home in Woodstock. Eventually they ended up at the museum that Mort Walker started in Ryebrook, which I believe now is moving to Florida.*

Anyway, what was your fan mail like on MOON MULLINS?

FERD: They liked the humor. And of course, they always wanted a picture.

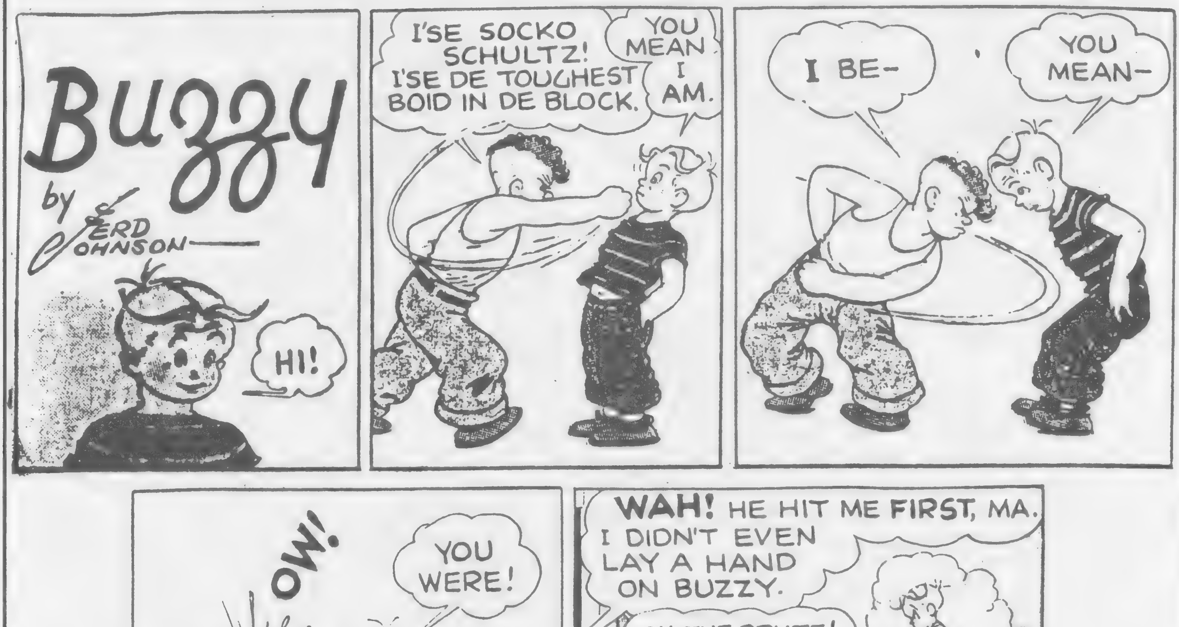
SHEL: *Did you print some up to send them?*

FERD: No, we drew them original sketches. I still get requests. I got some last week. They don't realize that MOON is gone.

SHEL: *I handled Milton Caniff's fan mail for a while, and we always got requests for drawings. Finally, Milton had to have postcards printed up to send out. He put a lot more hours into his panels than somebody like Charles Schulz.*

FERD: Schulz changed the whole

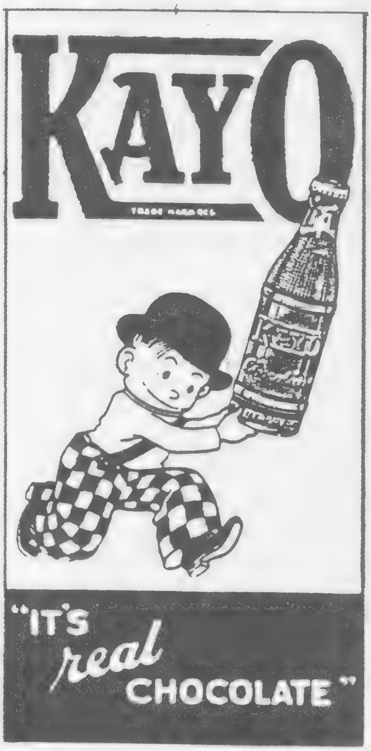
TEXAS SLIM returned in the 1940s and '50s, this time as a full-size Sunday strip again. On Oct. 10, 1943, it got a bottom-tier companion of its own, BUZZY, the first episode of which appears below.


Buzzy
by Ferd Johnson
HI!
I'SE SOCKO SCHULTZ! I'SE DE TOUGHEST BOID IN DE BLOCK.
YOU MEAN I AM.
I BE-
YOU MEAN-
OW!
YOU WERE!
WAH! HE HIT ME FIRST, MA. I DIDN'T EVEN LAY A HAND ON BUZZY.
OH, THE BRUTE! HE SHOULD BE ARRESTED.

Data and art: SFACA

"I was at the National Cartoonist Society's first meeting."

In its day, MOON MULLINS was as commercially exploitable as Supes and Spidey are today. But Frank Willard signed away rights for this beverage when he was drunk, and to his dying day hated to see ads for it.



business. He came in with that simplicity and then everybody tried to be simple.

SHEL: *And from what I understand, he makes a million dollars a month now from all of the merchandising, etc. Amazing!*

FERD: Well, hell, Knott's Berry Farm pays him a cut on every ticket people buy there!

SHEL: *And he's very big in Japan, with the greeting cards, the animated films, and everything. And he's a hell of a nice guy. He's real down to earth. He still likes to get to the board and draw those little people. I asked him what it was like to have all that money, and he said it was nice to look across the square to the bookstore and know that he could buy any book in the store.* (Laughter.) *That was his answer!*

He told me once he doesn't like to go anyplace where he can't be home by noon. When I saw him at the Reuben Awards in New York I said, "Sparky! You can't be home by noon today!"

FERD: *(Laughter.)* I used to go to those things, but I don't anymore. It's too expensive for me. Two or three thousand bucks for a hangover is too expensive! I don't like to travel much anymore, but when my wife was around we traveled all around the world.

SHEL: *And Tom has his family, doesn't he? Do you have any grandchildren?*

FERD: Yep. Four boys!

SHEL: *Any artists in the group?*

FERD: One, but he doesn't give a damn about it. He got married when he was 19. The youngest one just took off a couple of days ago for Boston University. One just graduated from Claremont — he's a second lieutenant. He wanted to be a flyer, and they took him on for a while. He trained in Texas and North Carolina and then they cut down on everything. They told him to go into the National Guard but he didn't want to because he'd lose his commission then. But he's still studying.

The oldest boy, who's a pretty good writer, wanted to be in foreign services. He speaks four languages. He'd be good for it, but he hasn't connected that way, although he has a job with an outfit which might expand in Europe.

They're a nice bunch of guys. They really are. And not because they're my grandsons! *(Laughter.)* They used to be stinkers, but now they're growing up.

SHEL: *Werner Wheppe-Olsen, a Danish cartoonist who lives in Carlsbad now, has a wife, two daughters, and a little boy. His little boy, Nicolai, is 12 and he said he could have been the model for Calvin in CALVIN AND HOBBES.*

FERD: I love that strip!

SHEL: *Nicolai is working on a children's book by himself. He's a good little artist. In the comic-book category of the Reubens, Werner has nominated Carl Barks every year, and the great Carl Barks has never won a Reuben Award. That's a terrible oversight. But Watterson has won twice and he doesn't even belong to the National Cartoonists' Society.*

FERD: The DOONESBURY guy, **Trudeau,** wouldn't join, and I think he won, too. The closest I got was to get nominated once, right after I took over MOON. But I did like to go down with those guys and get to know them all for a number of years.

SHEL: *You were probably a part of it in the heyday of the Society.*

FERD: I was at the first meeting.

SHEL: Is that right?

FERD: Rube Goldberg and **Billy DeBeck** started the thing.

SHEL: *What was the first meeting like?*

FERD: It was very interesting. **Willard** went, too. We all signed up for it.

SHEL: *Did you have any objectives?*

FERD: I think it was to help cartoonists with contracts and things like that. But they never did anything. They all just went down and got drunk. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *I went to a briefing in the late '60s. The guys were getting ready to go to Vietnam. There was Bil Keane and Morrie Turner and Tony DiPreta and Willard Mullin. I understand it was quite a hospital tour. It was a moving experience to entertain the wounded servicemen.*

FERD: They did that in those days. They'd go around to hospitals. **Al Capp** had an act. He'd go into a place where they had amputees and they'd kid him and all that sort of stuff and they would tell him, "You don't know what it's like." He'd say, "The hell I don't!" and he'd pull up his pant leg and show them his wooden leg.

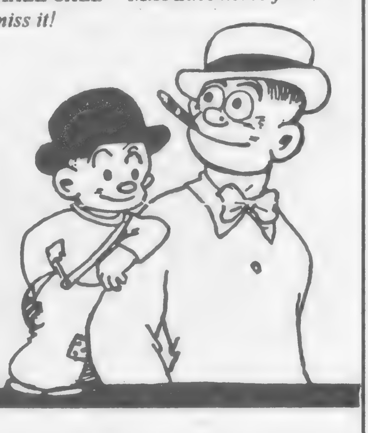
SHEL: *In the late '60s, I heard how Ham Fisher blew up photostats of LI'L ABNER, then drew in pornographic indications and presented them to the society. He thought Capp was still in Boston, and suddenly Capp appeared at the back of the room. A fistfight ensued, and Rube Goldberg broke them up. So Fisher was drummed out of the society.*

FERD: I knew **Fisher.** He was a cocky little guy!

SHEL: *He was an unhappy man, they say.*

FERD: I never thought much of **Capp,** personally, because at that time wives weren't invited. But **Capp** always showed up with a Powers model on each arm.

In Part Three, next issue, Ferd discusses his personal acquaintance with such luminaries as Milton Caniff, Walt Disney . . . and the star of Caniff's wartime strip MALE CALL — Miss Lace herself! Don't miss it!



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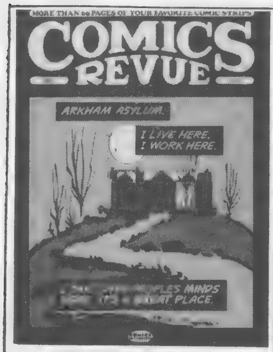
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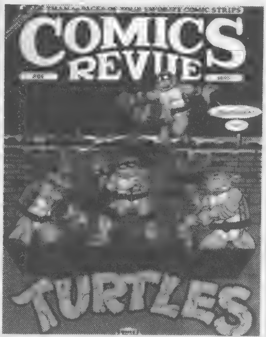
ARKHAM ASYLUM.
I LIVE HERE.
I WORK HERE.
...LES MINDS
...AT PLACE.

#63 **New Batman story begins! Complete Phantom story in this issue!** Plus Spider-Man, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Flash Gordon, Modesty Blaise, book reviews & letters!

#64 **New Modesty Blaise, Phantom & Gasoline Alley stories start! Complete Jeff Hawke story in this issue!** Plus Flash Gordon, Spider-Man, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles & Batman.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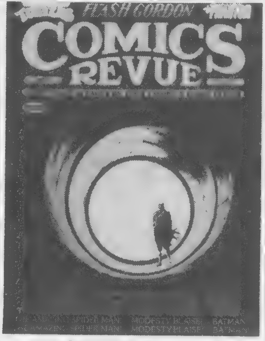
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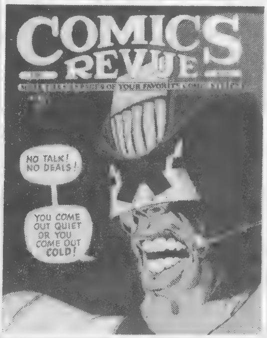
PHANTOM
COMICS REVUE
SPIDER-MAN
MODESTY BLAISE
BATMAN

#65 **Batman ends! Ninja Turtles story starts!** Plus Modesty Blaise, Gasoline Alley, Flash Gordon, Phantom, Spider-Man, Bloom County Extra, reviews & letters. ***COVER: ED HANNIGAN.***

#66 **Judge Dredd begins! New Gasoline Alley story starts!** Plus Phantom, Flash Gordon. Ninja Turtles, Spidey, Modesty Blaise, letters & reviews ***BONUS: COMPLETE BATMAN SUNDAY STORY.***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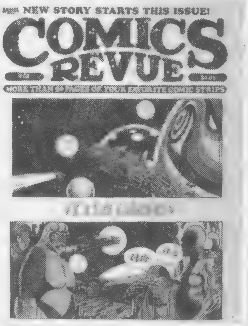
NO TALK!
NO DEALS!
YOU COME
OUT QUIET
OR YOU
COME OUT
COLD!

COMICS REVUE
NEW!
Modesty BLAISE
STORY STARTS
THIS ISSUE!

#67 **New Modesty Blaise, Flash Gordon stories begin! Complete Sir Bagby story!** Plus Phantom, Dredd, Turtles, Spidey, letters, reviews. ***BONUS: COMPLETE BATMAN SUNDAY STORY.***

#68 **Tarzan starts — complete story in this issue!** Plus Gasoline Alley, Flash Gordon, Phantom, Modesty Blaise, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Spider-Man, Judge Dredd, reviews.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Tarzan
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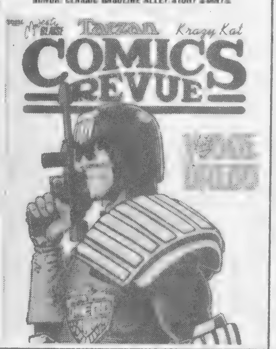
stairs!
Gasoline
Alley

#69 **Complete Gasoline Alley and Tarzan stories in this issue! New Ninja Turtles, Dredd stories start!** Plus Flash Gordon, Phantom, Modesty Blaise, B.C., reviews. ***COVER: ALAN HUTCHINSON.***

#70 **New Phantom, Gasoline Alley, Tarzan stories begin!** Plus B.C., Dredd, Flash Gordon, Ninja Turtles, Spidey, Modesty Blaise, reviews ***BONUS: CLASSIC GASOLINE ALLEY STORY STARTS.***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Tarzan
Krazy Kat
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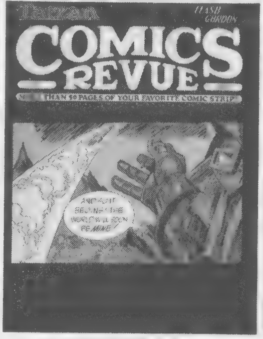
JUDGE DREDD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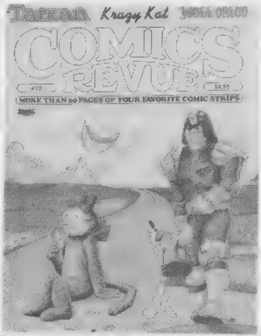
#71 **Classic Krazy Kat dailies begin! New Flash Gordon, Ninja Turtles stories start!** Plus Dredd, Gasoline Alley new & classic, Flash Gordon, Phantom, Spidey, B.C., Modesty Blaise, letters.

#72 **New Tarzan story begins!** Plus Spider-Man, Modesty Blaise, B.C., Flash Gordon, Phantom, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Judge Dredd, classic Gasoline Alley & Krazy Kat, reviews.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Krazy Kat
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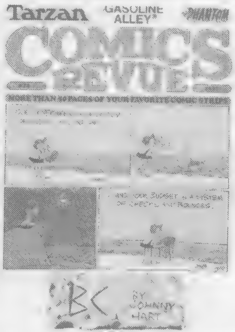
Modesty BLAISE
IVORY DANCER

#73 **New Modesty Blaise story begins!** Plus Tarzan, B.C., Phantom, Flash Gordon, Judge Dredd, Turtles, Spider-Man, classic Krazy Kat & complete Gasoline Alley story, letters.

#74 **New Phantom, Tarzan, classic Gasoline Alley stories start!** Plus B.C., Flash Gordon, Spider-Man, Judge Dredd, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Modesty Blaise, classic Krazy Kat, letters.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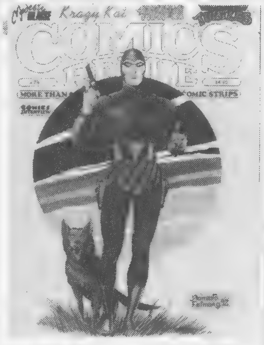
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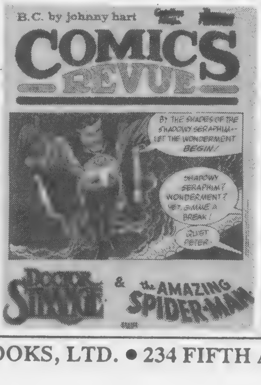
#75 Phantom, B.C., Modesty Blaise, Flash Gordon, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Spider-Man, Tarzan, classic Gasoline Alley & Krazy Kat, reviews. ***COVER: ROMANO FELMANG.***

#76 **New Spider-Man Meets Dr. Strange, new Flash Gordon stories start!** Plus Modesty Blaise, Phantom, B.C., Tarzan, Turtles, classic Gasoline Alley, Krazy Kat. ***BONUS: ORIGIN OF SPIDEY!***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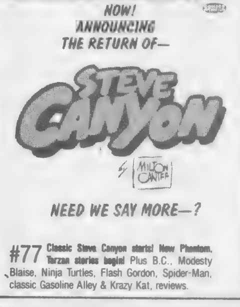
SHADOWY SERAPHIM? WONDERMENT? YET, GIMME A BREAK!
QUIET PETER!
DOCTOR STRANGE
&
the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN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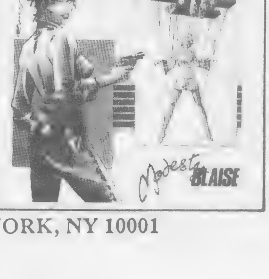
#77 **Classic Steve Canyon starts! New Phantom, Tarzan stories begin!** Plus B.C., Modesty Blaise, Ninja Turtles, Flash Gordon, Spider-Man, classic Gasoline Alley & Krazy Kat, reviews.

#78 **New Modesty Blaise story begins!** Plus Tarzan, Phantom, Gordon, B.C., Turtles, Spidey, classic Canyon, Krazy Kat & Gasoline Alley, Shel Dorf guest editorial, reviews. ***COVER: ROMERO.***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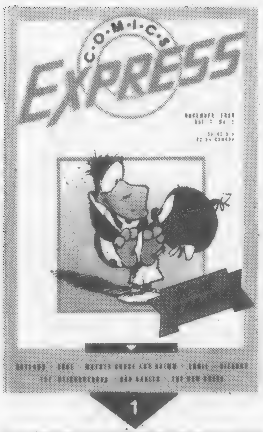

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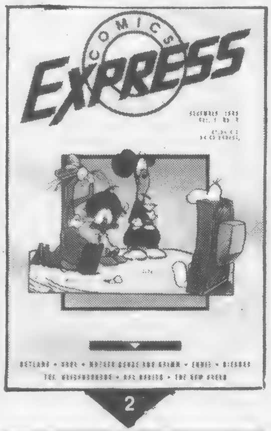

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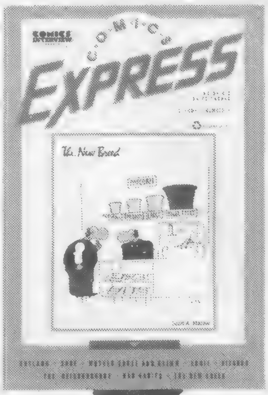

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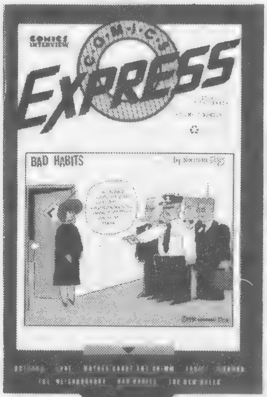

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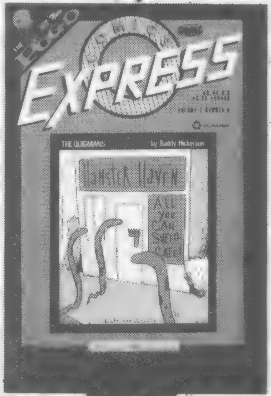

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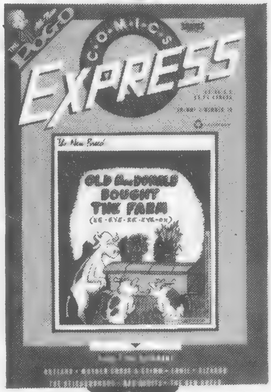

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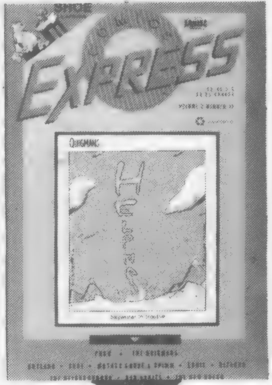

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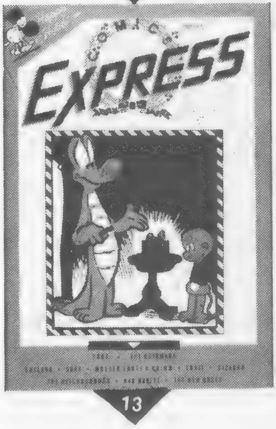

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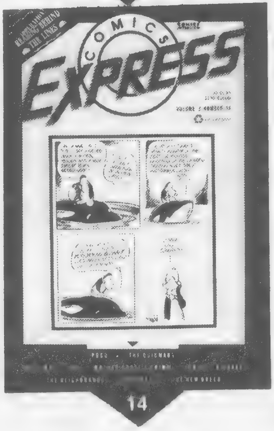

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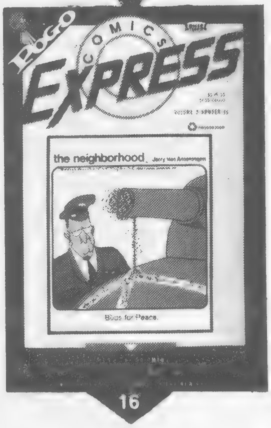

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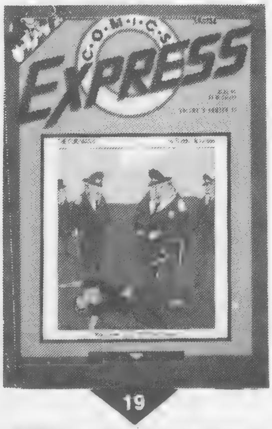
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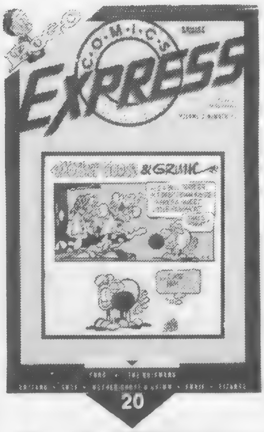
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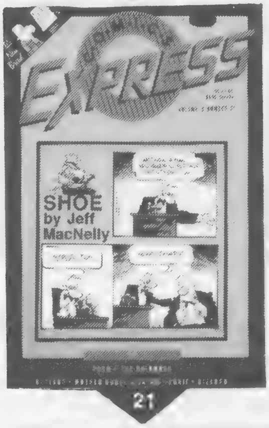
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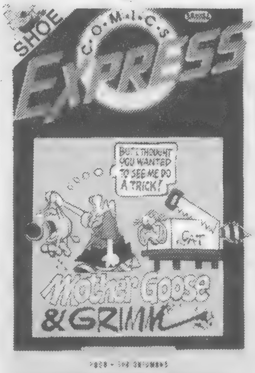
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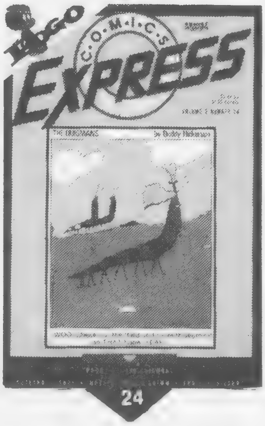
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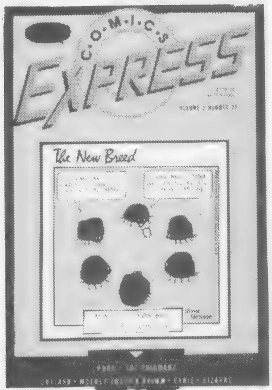
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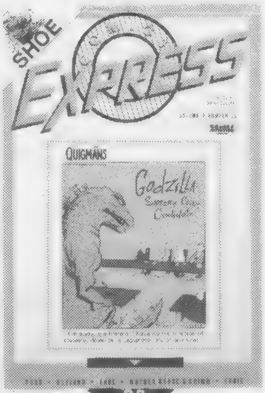
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LAST WORD

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INTERVIEW'S READERS ARE EVERYWHERE!

Dear **Mr. Hagen:**

I've been meaning to write to let you know how much I enjoyed your interviews of **Frank Miller** and **Nathaniel Branden**. I am a clinical and research psychologist and author (THE CUSTODY REVOLUTION: THE FATHER FACTOR AND THE MOTHERHOOD MYSTIQUE, 1992, Poseidon/ Simon & Schuster). I picked up COMICS INTERVIEW #113 while I was writing a paper analyzing Batman from a psychological perspective. The interview with **Branden** was an unexpected bonus, as was your discussion of **Ayn Rand.** I have been a big fan of **Rand** since 1965 and was actually a representative of the Nathaniel Branden Institute which promoted her ideas.

I've become very interested not only in Batman's psyche and mythos, but in the link between **Bob Kane's** life and his creation of Batman. My work in this area has been well-received by my colleagues. If you know of any resources that would assist me I'd certainly appreciate hearing from you. I've read **Kane's** biography and Vaz's TALES OF THE DARK KNIGHT, both of which were extremely helpful. If you plan any interviews with **Kane** in the future, I have several questions that may yield interesting material.

Incidentally, regarding the psychological significance of flying dreams: one theory suggests that these dreams may be related to pre-verbal memories of an infant being swooped or thrown in the air. This doesn't replace **Branden's** notion of flying as a metaphor for freedom, but it does give another dimension to it.

It was nice to see **Rand's** influence in the world of comics. I look forward to reading your future work.

Richard A. Warshak, Ph.D.
Clinical Professor
Department of Psychiatry
Division of Psychology
University of Texas Southwestern
Medical Center
16970 Dallas Parkway
Suite 202
Dallas, TX 75248

Dan appreciates the kind words, and while there are no immediate plans for another Bob Kane interview, you might be interested to see what he had to say to us in two earlier interviews, which are available in our first BATMAN SUPER SPECIAL. Please keep our readership posted on your work in this area.

— DAK

Lyle Talbot, from the Warner Bros. days. Lyle played everything from Superman's foe, Luthor, to Batman's Commissioner Gordon. See INTERVIEW #125 for the story.

SUPERMAN'S SERIAL ARCH-ENEMY WISHES *US* WELL

DearJulia:

Thank you for your very kind letter and the copy of COMICS INTERVIEW #125. This is the first one I've seen and it's a *great* comics magazine. I've always been a big comics fan. The interview with **Dan Hagen** was very well done, one of the best I've ever had. He was a very nice young man and pleasant to talk to. Thank him for me. Wishing you continued success with COMICS INTERVIEW.

Lyle Talbot
Opera Plaza
601 Van Ness Ave. #451
San Francisco, CA 94102

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE?

Dear DAK & Dan,

While I enjoyed the interview with **Lyle Talbot** in the latest issue of COMICS INTERVIEW (#125) (I didn't even know that Lyle was still alive; I figured he had passed away years ago), would it have killed you to try to procure a current photo of Lyle to run with the interview? A picture of him as Commissioner Gordon wouldn't have hurt, either.

Delmo (the Saint) Walters Jr.
1831 White Plains Road #1B
Bronx, NY 10462

Never let it be said we don't aim to please — and succeed! If you cast your beady orbs about the page, Delmo, you'll find your request for a current photo of Lyle Talbot granted.

— DAK

INTERNATIONAL ACCLAIM — INTERVIEW: THE ONLY CONSISTENT & SERIOUS PUBLICATION ON COMICS

Dear DAK,

I have been especially enjoying your issues of late, which has given rise to my writing — something I have wanted to accomplish for some time. I received issue #124 only hours ago and have been so immediately engrossed in reading it that I have done nothing else but that, from cover too cover. (I do however tend to read my favorite issues several times, so I have that enjoyable prospect still ahead of me). Why do I like this one so much? Because of the interview with **Alvin Schwartz.** Your publication performs several interesting functions: highlighting "hot" new creators, discussing crossovers between comics and other media, as well as others. The **Alvin Schwartz** interview is one of those "others" that I enjoy the most — rediscovering past, sometimes-forgotten or only half-remembered creators, fleshing out the history of comics, and truly personalizing it. Hence it was fun to get to know **Mr. Schwartz** indirectly. I found his history particularly interesting because he bridges several areas, primarily the "high" and "popular" culture divisions and I likewise have an interest in comics while existing as a "fine art" painter, critic and theorist. **Rich Morrissey** showed a well-researched knowledge of **Mr. Schwartz's** activities and did an admirable job of drawing out interesting observations from him, making for a lively and personable interview.

There are three small suggestions that I would like to make which I believe would improve COMICS INTERVIEW. First, it would be nice to have a more obvious byline for the interviewer/writer of each interview. As I have mentioned they can determine the quality of a piece almost as much as the interviewee themselves. So, where I like the little page-header boxes I would appreciate something like an "interviewed by XXX" between the title page headline ("ALVIN SCHWARTZ") and the body text, both in placement and in font size (perhaps just a few steeps above body text font size, but bold). This would be another step in the direction of creator rights, something you have always justifiably championed, and — again — more personal. Secondly, it would be pleasing if the "Last Word" letters page were expanded to around three pages. This time it was only half a page. It can be a lively forum at times which should be encouraged. I would love to see something along the lines of the old pre-DC MS. TREE letters pages. Thirdly, I suggest the addition of a couple of short (300-500 word) prose commentary pieces concerning issues pertinent to comics issues. Perhaps these could be solicited as well as submitted to encourage quality and diversity. Your "Up Front" often does this, but the addition of others would further such discussion, perhaps even stirring contention or controversy, which can be good.

Yours is, to my mind, the only consistent and serious publication about comics. Therefore, this addition could advocate significant analysis, something unfortunately all too often lost between fandom and hype. Hopefully more fun, too. Themes could be something on the mind of a professional, some point that has been bothering a reader, things more critical (by this I don't mean negative but analytical) such as: "Why Collect At All," or "Why Does Comics Collecting Usually Resemble Bottle Cap Collecting More than Art Collecting?", "On the Differences between European and American Comics Formats and Scenes," "The Value of More Comics Publishers," "The Uniqueness of the Comics Medium," opinions about where comics seem to be developing toward, or where they should, etc.

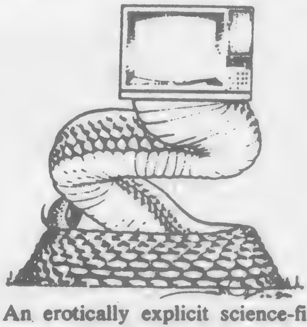
I hope you find these ideas interesting and consider them, even though they are not mountainously important, and not even really criticisms, but suggestions that would advance the already fine quality of COMICS INTERVIEW.

Mark Staff Brandl
Stornackerstr. 8
CH-900 St. Gallen
Switzerland

Suggestions, especially such well-considered ones as yours, are very welcome, Mark — and thanks especially for noticing what I, too, like to think is some of the most consistent serious coverage of the comics industry available anywhere. That you're able to kick back and enjoy it in one of the most beautiful countries in the world makes you the envy of all our readers — even me.

— DAK

SIMONSON & McGREGOR



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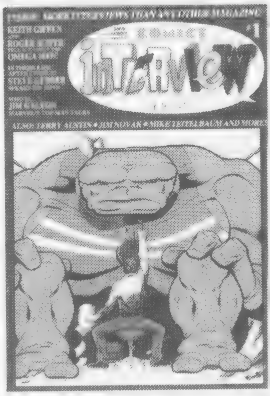
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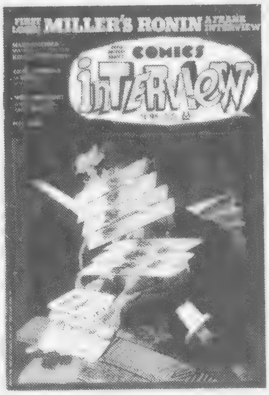
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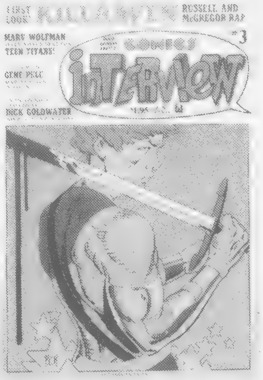
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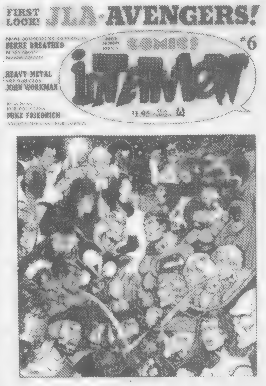
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JOHN WORKMAN
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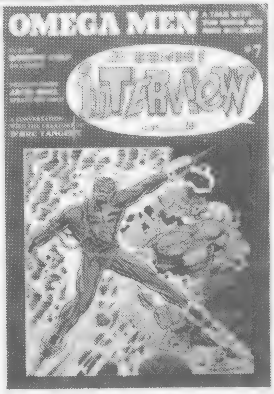
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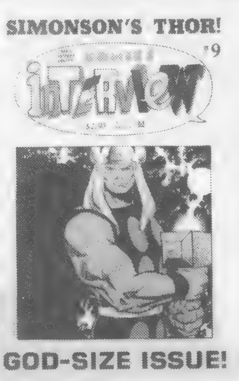
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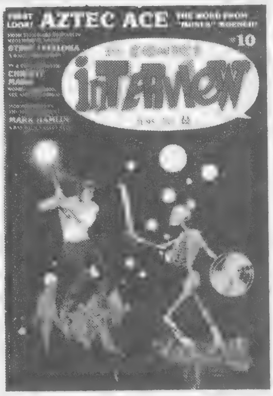
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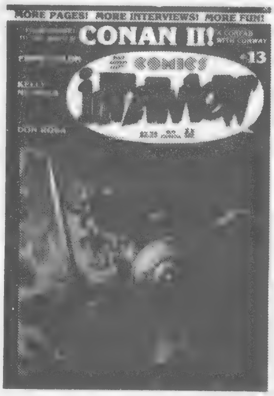
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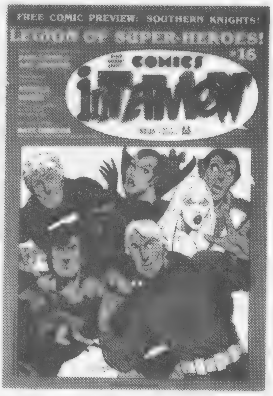
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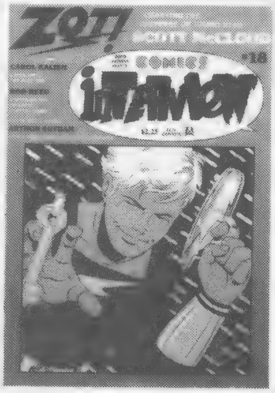
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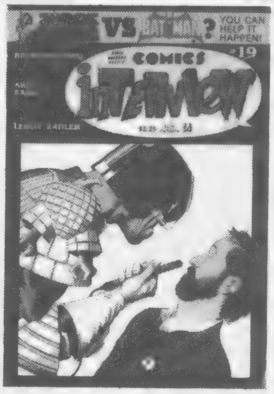
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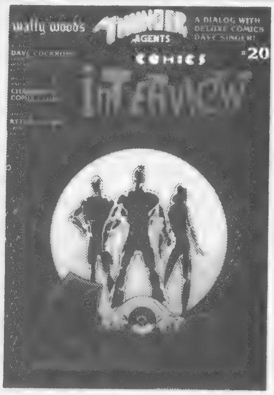
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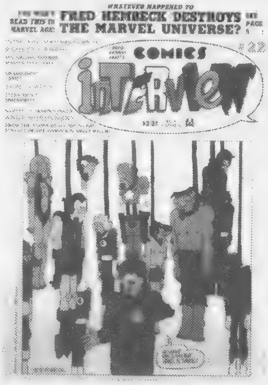
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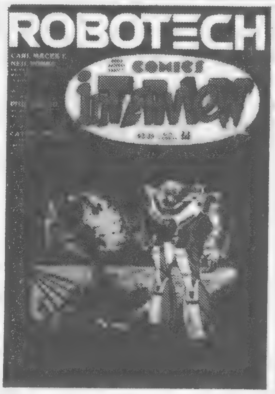
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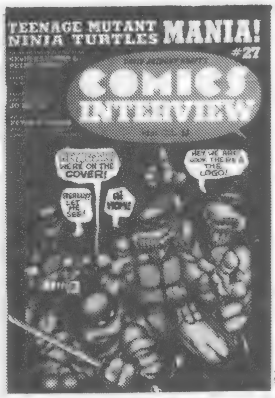
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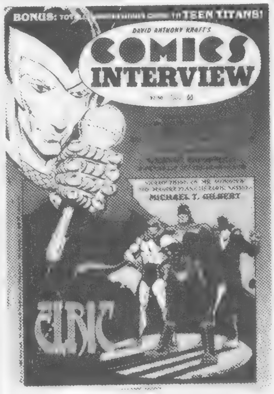
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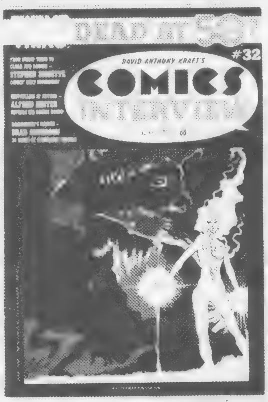
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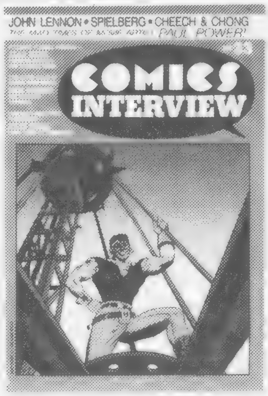
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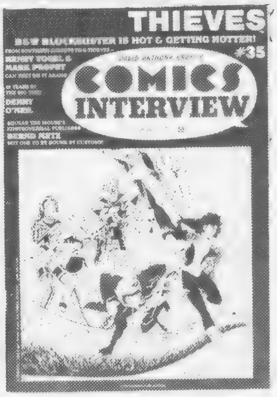
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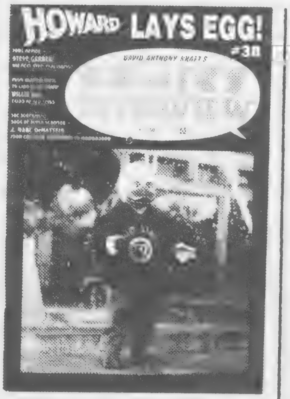
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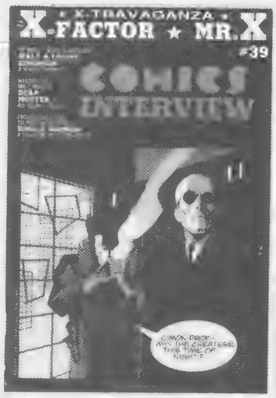
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X-FACTOR ★ MR. X
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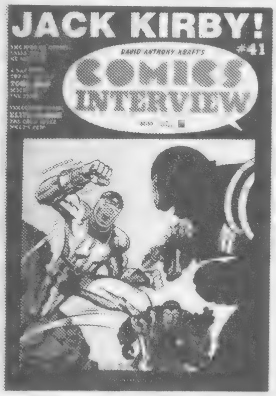
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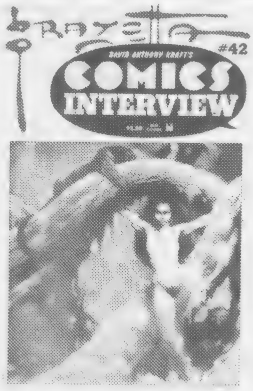
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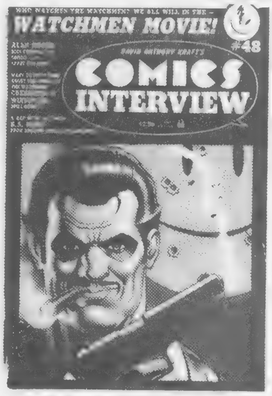
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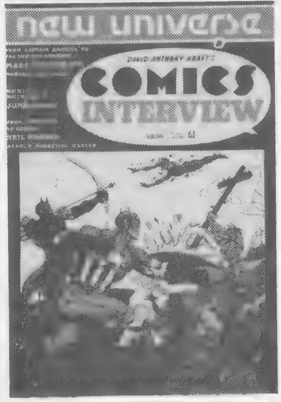
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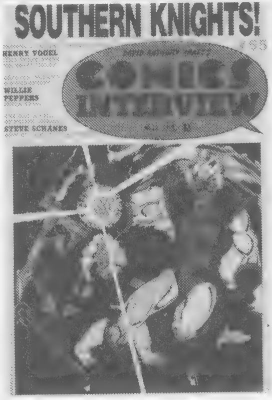
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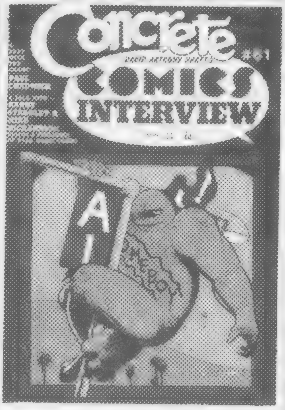
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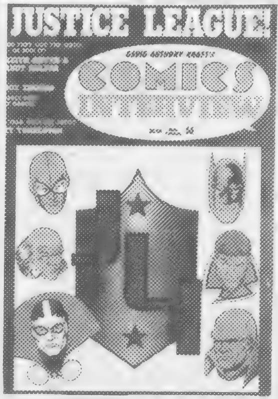
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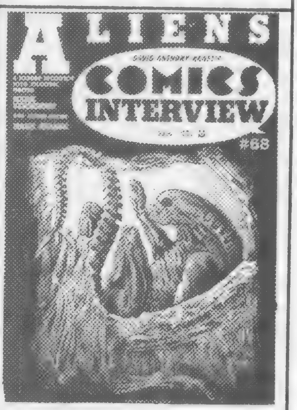
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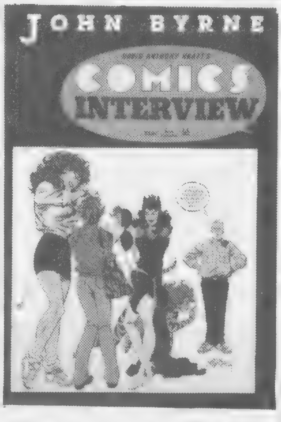
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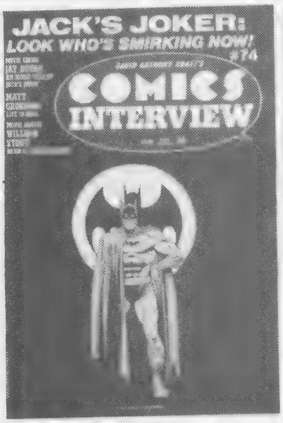
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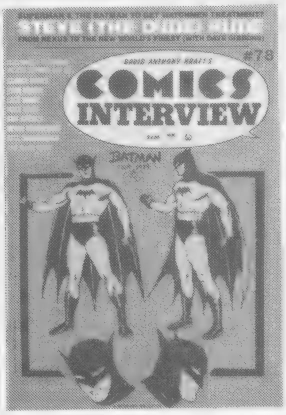
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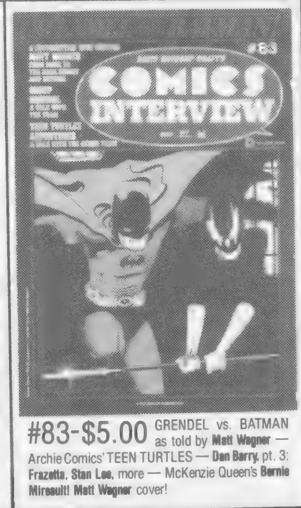
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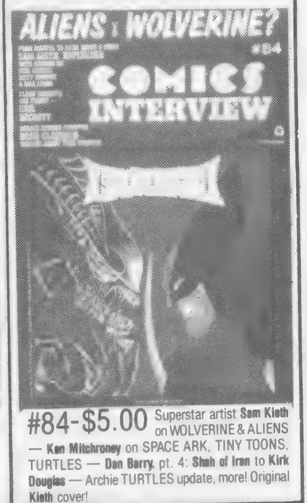
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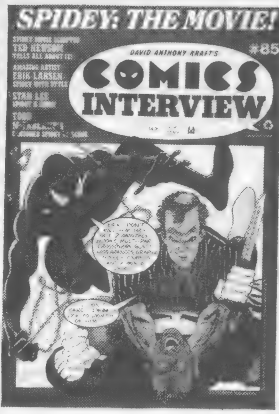
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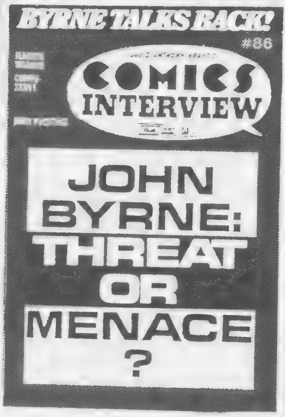
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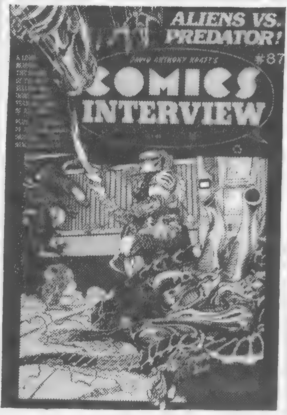
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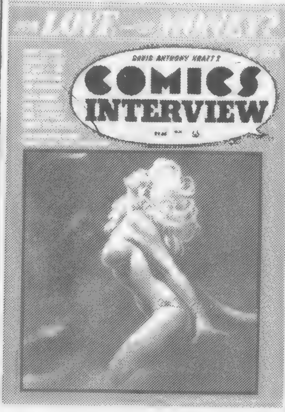
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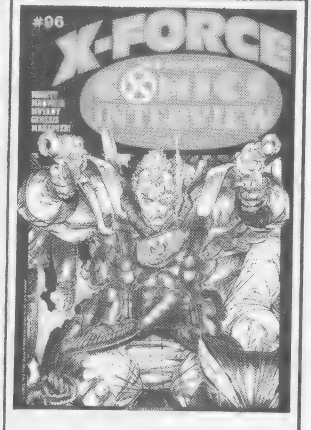
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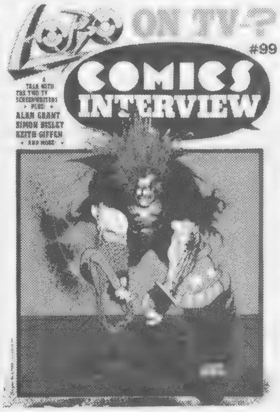
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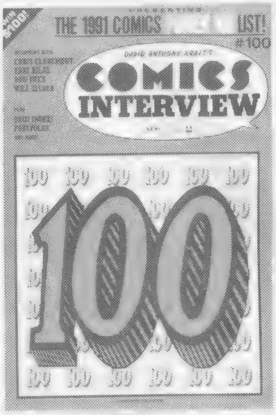
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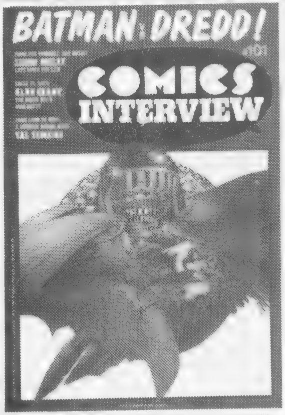
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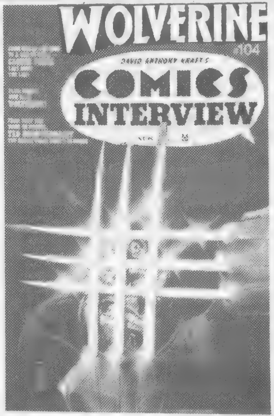
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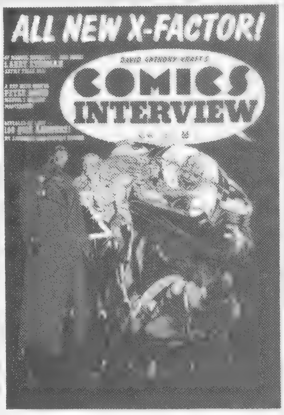
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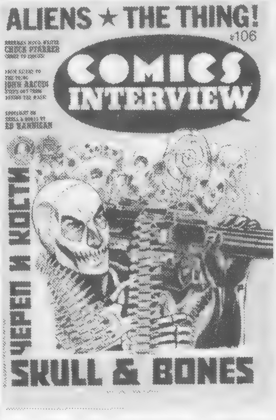
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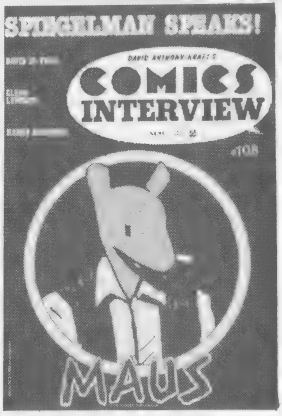
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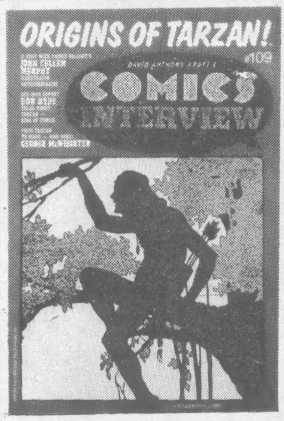
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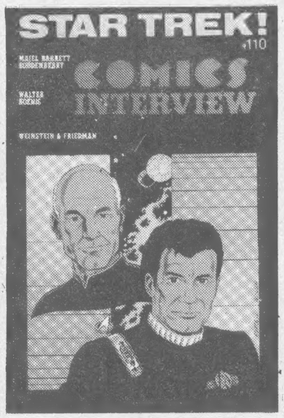
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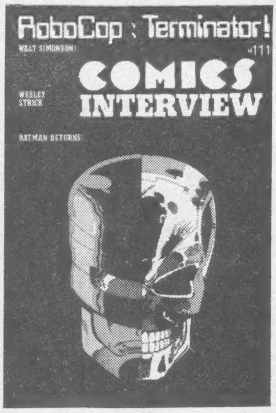
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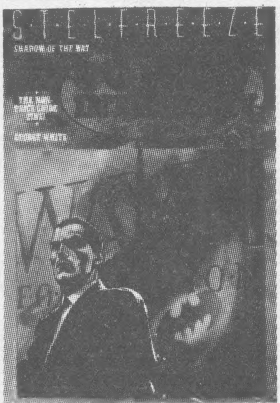
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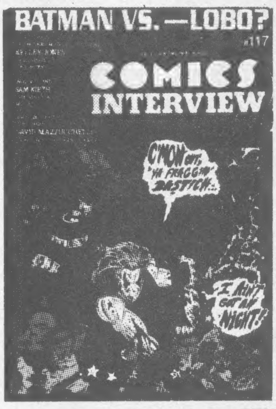
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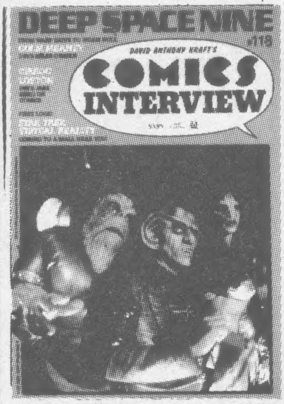
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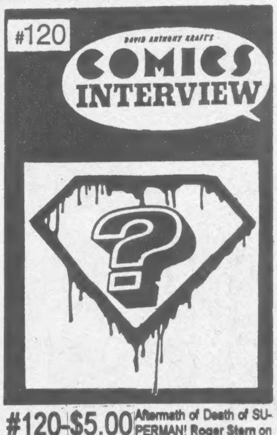
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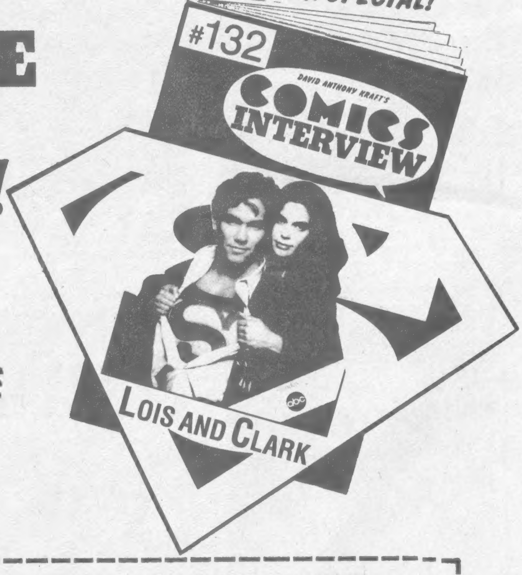
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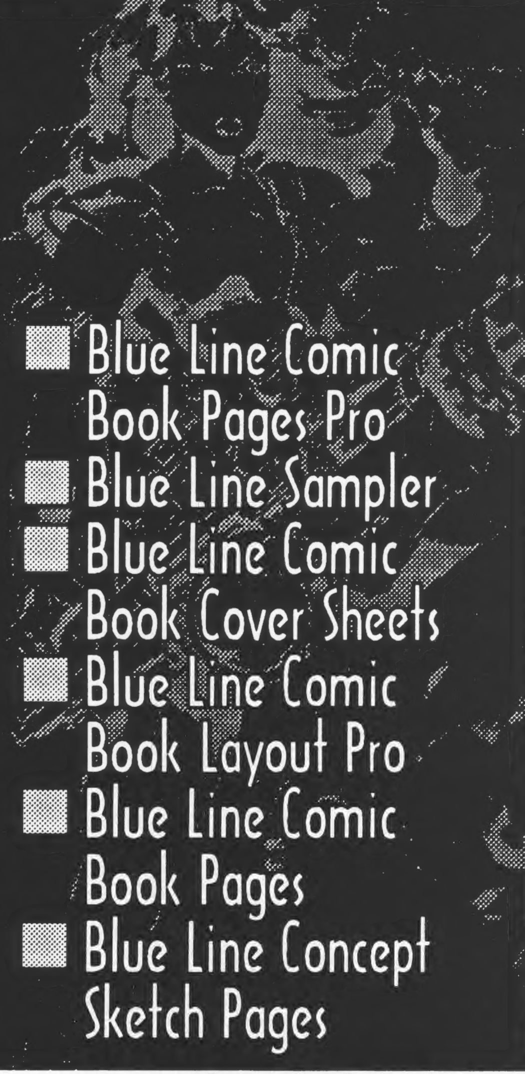

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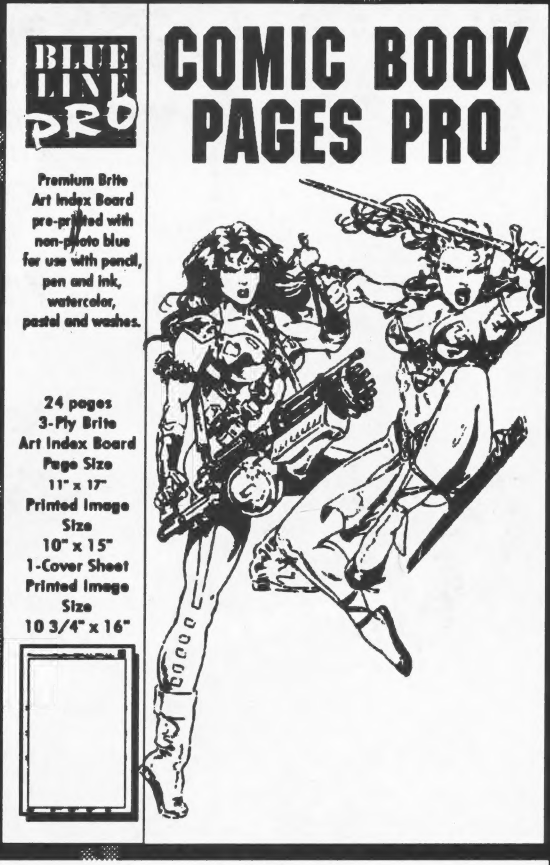

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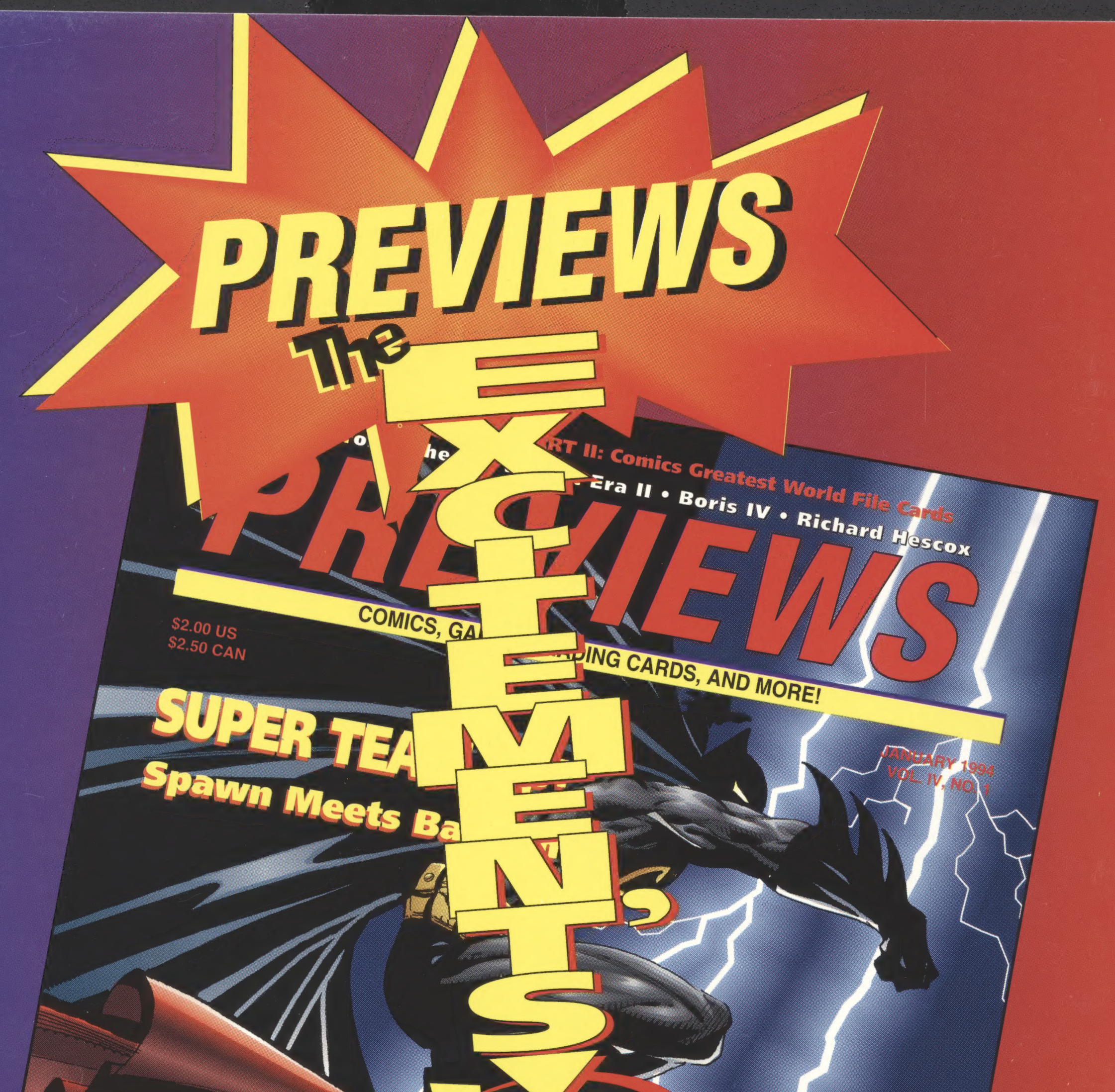

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